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Fatality!

In my regular Wednesday office game, I decided to start running my group through the new Scales of War Adventure Path. Unfortunately, we'd begun *Keep on the Shadowfell* before I had "Rescue at Riven-roar" in hand, so we picked up the Scales of War campaign with this month's installment, "The Siege of Bordrin's Watch." We were on our second session of the adventure a couple weeks back, and I sprang a random encounter on my group. Some assassins jumped them in a shady part of town. Combat ensued, and the fight was, eventually, won by the PCs. But not before we had our first campaign death.

Alas, poor Atticus, we knew you well.

The poor halfling died ignobly, skewered by a halberd, then shanked again with a coup de grace, then, when that didn't kill him, kicked off the top of a 20-foot roof. I mean, it all made sense in the context of the adventure. Really.

So why does this matter? I mean, PCs die all the time, right?

Here's the deal. Way back last year, when we first started talking about the new Adventure Path, I pointed out that back in the day, Shackled City (*Dungeon*'s first Adventure Path) was something of a meat grinder. Apparently, many a group ended up a stain on the dungeon floor running through one of those adventures. The interesting thing is that, for the most part, the encounters in the Shackled City Adventure Path weren't particularly beyond the scope of a normal 3E encounter, at least in terms of XP gained for the level of the characters.

Nope, what made many of those ultra-deadly encounters tough was that each author felt obliged to come up with unique, compelling, and integrated encounters. They felt that, to do the campaign justice, they needed to make the most of their encounters, using a combination of monsters working together with terrain in an elegant, symbiotic, and often fatal, dance. In many ways, they were following the 4th Edition encounter design philosophy—using monsters, traps, and terrain all together in a wonderful stew—before 4th Edition was even a glimmer in anyone's eye. Kudos to those authors!

Many other 3E encounters didn't follow this philosophy. Sure, they featured the occasional bit of interesting terrain or a cool trap, but encounters weren't often designed with all three game elements in mind. Now, encounters integrate these elements as the rule, not the exception.

So back to that meeting. We decided to make the Scales of War a middle-of-the-4th-Edition road campaign. It wouldn't be any harder or easier than the baseline. So when Atticus fell to his ultimate death, the first thought that popped into my brain was, "Oh, crap. What have I done?"

I mean, the fight was tough. There weren't any traps, but terrain certainly had an impact (excuse the pun). But looking at the encounter now, I can see that this was a good thing. It shows me that 4th Edition characters are not invulnerable. A clever combination of monsters, traps, and terrain can put the fear in any D&D party, as well as spawn countless tales of ill-fated character deaths that players will remember for years.

HEROIC 1-10

Siege of Bordrin's Watch

by Robert J. Schwalb

illustrations by William O'Connor and David Griffith ✦ cartography by Mike Schley

How can we forget the suffering of our kin during the Age of Chains? How can we set aside those ancient grudges when the risk of slavery is now greater than ever? Fellow warriors, the orcs are upon us, marching once more to the beat of the giants' drum. It falls to us to stop them—to hold fast no matter their numbers. If we falter, we give into fear. It's not just ourselves and our way of life that will suffer; all people of the Elsir Vale will perish as well. War is upon us. Now is the time for men and women of courage to stand up and defend those who cannot defend themselves.

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What's an Adventure Path?

Scales of War is the fourth Adventure Path to appear in the pages of *Dungeon Magazine*. But what, you ask, is an Adventure Path? Quite simply, it is a series of related adventures intended to form a complete D&D campaign that takes your players from 1st level all the way to, in the case of Scales of War, 30th level.

Previous Adventure Paths, presented with the 3rd Edition D&D rules, took characters from 1st to 20th level. But with all three tiers in the new edition ripe and ready to explore, we're pushing the limit with Scales of War. Each tier takes roughly six adventures to traverse, which means we'll finish off this Adventure Path in about eighteen issues. Each adventure advances characters from between one and a half to two levels of experience. We recognize that not everyone will meet every encounter or complete every quest, however, so periodically, we'll point you to a supplemental Side Trek or short adventure to keep your PCs on pace. Plus, roughly every few months, *Dragon* will feature new support content for Scales of War.

Finally, this Adventure Path is intended to function as a complete D&D campaign. That means we'll be making some assumptions about the history of the world as we move along, just as you would in any campaign you run. We'll be borrowing heavily from the D&D mythology of 4th Edition, as well as all the great ideas that have cropped up in other products over the years—including the pages of past issues of *Dungeon*!

Enjoy your stay in Scales of War, and keep an eye out for next month's installment.

"Siege of Bordrin's Watch" is an adventure for five 3rd-level characters. By the end of the adventure, the characters should be halfway through 4th-level. You can run this adventure as the sequel to "Rescue at Rivenroar," continuing the unfolding story of the Scales of War campaign, or run it as part of a campaign of your own design. This adventure features exploration, roleplaying opportunities, and combats in dynamic environments, making it a perfect addition to any campaign.

In this adventure, a new threat looms to the west: A vast horde of orcs and their despicable kin emerge from the barren lands bent on plunder and conquest. While the Elsir Vale and other lands mobilize their meager forces to respond to the danger, a call has gone out to those heroes of the Vale to join forces and help to push back this new evil before it's too late.

Background

The lands west of the Stonehome Mountains have been a festering mire of want and suffering. This parched and barren landscape is suited only for orcs, goblinoids, and other fell creatures. From time to time, a warlord gathers a small army and tumbles out of these badlands to test their strength and arms against the stalwart dwarf defenders, but never have they crossed the mountains because straddling its single pass is an ancient dwarven stronghold named Bordrin's Watch. No matter how many orcs muster, they die upon its walls, painting the sturdy stone with their black blood. So the rumors of a new host in these forlorn bogs and dead woods seemed a small threat—nothing the guardians could not handle. This army, though, is different. Unlike all the many times the orcs have emerged, they now have a leader who can keep them together long enough to win.

The orc leader is an overlarge warrior and chieftain named Tusk. Not a true orc, he has the blood of ogres in his veins, which makes him larger, tougher, and eminently more dangerous. Having slaughtered half a dozen orc chieftains, he drew together the unruly tribes to mount an offensive against Bordrin's Watch to lay claim to the soft lands beyond its walls. Tusk knows the history of the Stonehome Mountains well, knowing that unless he can find some way to bypass the fortress in the mountains, it won't matter how many warriors he commands since he would fail. What Tusk needs is a way around the fortress.

Ever resourceful and with numerous contacts and allies, Tusk turned to his occasional lover and advisor, a shadar-kai witch named Myrissa. He sent her back to the Shadowfell to recruit allies to help his cause, and a short time later she returned with a small army of dark ones, led by a mysterious and sinister dark creeper, known as the emissary. This leader offered to assist Tusk in exchange for an exclusive arrangement in which they would supply Tusk's armies with weaponry for whatever price the dark creeper and his fellows asked, and in exchange, the dark creepers would find a way through the mountains. Tusk readily agreed and paid the exorbitant price, gaining a fine arsenal, and also, he hoped, the key to victory.

Not long after, the dark creepers returned and revealed a number of tunnels burrowed beneath the mountain. They showed the chieftain the locations of each, explaining how the passages connected one side of the mountains to the other. No tunnel was large enough to accommodate his entire army, so, Tusk gave his horde their marching orders, sending them to climb the mountain slopes, while his scouts moved

ahead to secure the tunnels and prepare the way for Tusk and his elite warriors to strike the fortress from below.

Adventure Synopsis

Even though the dwarves have been successful in containing the orc hordes in the past, this time it's different and the dwarves of Overlook are concerned that the walls of the Bordrin's Watch might not be enough to staunch the flood. All their misgivings stem from the reports brought back by their own scouts, who mention endless ranks of orcs, trolls, and worse marching inexorably to the Stonehome Mountains. To shore up the thin number of defenders to man the Watch, Overlook dispatched a call to arms, beseeching able-bodied men and women across the Elsir Vale to mobilize at Overlook and then join forces with the defenders in the mountains. With the memory of the last war that ravaged the Vale, militias formed up and adventurers from as far away as Brindol answered the call.

This adventure assumes the characters are among those who go to aid the dwarves. Being seasoned adventurers and with some notoriety for their success in Rivenroar, it should be clear from the locals and any NPC allies the characters might have made that joining the dwarves is the right thing to do. Of course, if the PCs need a bit more prompting, you might convince them to head in this direction by throwing a few orcs at their current residence to drive home the severity of the threat. Alternatively, Overlook is a city of some size, and it makes an ideal place for the characters to spend their hard-earned gold.

Along the way, the characters encounter a patrol of orcs, which suggests that the orcs have somehow crossed the mountains. Armed with this information, the characters should approach the Council of Elders to reveal the new threat. With this revelation, the Council believes they have been compromised and that the tunnels beneath the mountains breached. Even though this development poses great danger to their defenses, the orc horde is still far enough away that there is time to seal the tunnels and prevent the orcs from coming through the tunnels. Thus, it falls to the PCs and two other groups to secure the tunnels and seal the Nexus to prevent the orcs from breaching the defenses.

The Council of Elders assigns the task of securing the tunnels beneath the Monastery of the Sundered Chain to the PCs, and they dispatch other groups to the other weak points in their defenses. Once the characters arrive at the old monastery, it is clear the other locations might be compromised and the other adventuring groups might be overmatched. Assuming the PCs find Kalad (see page 38), the heroes learn the dwarf paladin already secured the tunnel to Bordrin's Watch, but discover the Vents are likely not secure. So, the characters must travel down to the lower tunnels, make their way past the orc invaders, and locate the ancient Nexus to complete their mission before the orc hordes arrive. Sealing the Nexus, then, constitutes a major quest worth 750 XP.

The Quest

"Siege of Bordrin's Watch" offers the opportunity for PCs to earn quest XP in a couple of places. Provided here is the list of quests, and their rewards, in the adventure.

Major Quest—Sealing the Nexus
The PCs must travel down to the lower tunnels, make their way past the orc invaders, and locate the ancient Nexus to complete their mission before the orc hordes arrive.

Reward: 750 XP (and 1,000 gp [four parcels]).

Preparing for Adventure

"Siege of Bordrin's Watch" takes the characters into a deadly environment and pits them against the advance troops of a deadly orc horde. As such, the characters venture into enormous chambers and use their talents against terrifying foes, all the while racing to reach the Nexus before the horde arrives. Obviously, a good reading of the adventure can only help, but if you're under the gun, you can skip over the introductory materials and go straight to the adventure. You should, at the very least, review the encounters, while paying attention to the creatures, their powers, and the settings in which the characters face them.

What You Need to Play

This adventure includes the encounters the PCs face as they explore and adventure in the area. It also provides tactical maps and more for the adventure. If you and your players haven't read through the Dungeons & Dragons *4th Edition* rules yet, that is your first best step so that you make certain you understand the rules. Also as mentioned above, read through at least the first few encounters described in this adventure before starting. This review enables you to become familiar with the material and the style of presentation. You might also want to take a look at the sections below regarding the adventure format.

Using Tactical Encounters

Each encounter includes several common elements, as described below.

Encounter Level

Each tactical encounter assumes a group of five player characters. An encounter of average difficulty is one where the encounter level is equal to the level of the party. Encounters that are 1 or 2 levels lower than the party are easy encounters, while encounters that are 2 or more levels higher than the party are difficult encounters.

For overcoming an encounter, a group earns the XP value listed beside the encounter level. This amount should be divided by the number of group members, and an equal amount should be awarded to each character.

Setup

This section of a tactical encounter provides you with the basic parameters of the encounter. First, it provides context or background information for the encounter. Next, it provides a key to the monsters in the encounter so you can locate them on the tactical map. The map of each encounter area indicates where the monsters are located when the encounter begins. The setup section also describes what monsters are doing and how they react when the PCs arrive.

Read-Aloud Text

Read aloud text provides information about what the characters can see and are aware of. You do not have to read it word for word; feel free to paraphrase and use your own words when describing this information. Use read aloud text wisely; they are written for the most common approach to a particular situation and what your player characters do might require you to alter the information in any number of ways.

Monster Statistics

Encounters include stat blocks for each monster type present in the encounter. If more than one monster of a particular kind is present, the stat block indicates how many creatures can be found.

Tactics

This entry describes special actions the monsters take to defeat the adventurers. Sometimes this means the monsters take advantage of special features of the area or make use of special powers or equipment.

Map

Each encounter includes a map keyed with the initial locations of each monster. The map also indicates the location of any special features of the area.

Features of the Area

This section describes special features noted on the map. If the location has items or areas of interest with which the characters can interact, those features are described here. Look here to see if a door is out of the ordinary, if an altar has a secret compartment, or if the area includes treasure.

Treasure Preparation

As with the first installment of the Scales of War campaign, "Siege of Bordrin's Watch" makes use of the parcel system of treasure rewards as described in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. The characters should accumulate 15 parcels by the end of the adventure. Of these, they should gain the reward for completing the mission (four parcels for 1,000 gp), and then whatever treasures they find along the way (the remaining eleven). You can supply these treasures in whatever way you wish, but the following sidebar presents the

most likely rooms to bear treasure. During your preparation, assign parcels from those that follow to the rooms in the spaces provided. Use the players' wish lists to come up with magic items for the first six parcels.

Starting the Adventure

You can kick off the adventure in two ways: quick and slow. Use the quick-start method if you want to move straight to the action. The slow start emphasizes roleplaying and stretches out the opening sequence to build the tension leading up to the major quest.

Quick Start

When using this method, read aloud the following text and proceed to the skill challenge described under the Monastery of the Sundered Chain on page 27.

War approaches. A week ago, a call to arms sounded throughout the Elsir Valley, summoning warriors to help defend Bordrin's Watch in the Stonehome Mountains far to the west. Word of an army of orcs on the march had spread through the Vale for months, but now, it appeared the rumors were true.

You, along with militia groups and other adventurers from all over the Vale, marched west until you came to the city of Overlook, a large fortified community raised by dwarves centuries ago. Once there, you and two other groups were invited to attend the Council of Elders, where you learned the Bordrin's Watch had already been compromised—advanced parties of orcs had uncovered the tunnels beneath the mountains and were already coming through

TREASURE PARCELS

Parcel A: _____, M-2.
Parcel B: _____, M-4.
Parcel C: _____, M-4.
Parcel D: _____, M-5.
Parcel E: _____, M-5.
Parcel F: _____, M-5.
Parcel G: _____, V-3.
Parcel H: _____, V-3.
Parcel I: _____, V-4.
Parcel J: _____, V-4.
Parcel K: _____, V-4.

Based on the guidelines in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, the following parcels can go in the lines above. Rely on the wish lists your players gave you for the first four parcels.

Parcel 1: Magic item, level 7
Parcel 2: Magic item, level 7
Parcel 3: Magic item, level 6
Parcel 4: Magic item, level 5
Parcel 5: Magic item, level 5
Parcel 6: Magic item, level 4
Parcel 7: Two *potions of healing*, two gems worth 100 gp, 80gp
Parcel 8: One *potion of healing*, 250 gp art object, 40 gp
Parcel 9: 80 gp, 300 sp
Parcel 10: One *potion of healing*, 90 gp
Parcel 11: 50 gp, 400 sp

Adapting the Adventure: "Siege at Bordrin's Watch" is designed with five players in mind. This said, you can adapt the adventure for larger groups easily by adding more treasure and inserting a few extra monsters using the guidelines presented in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. When adapting the adventure for larger groups, keep it simple. Where possible, just add one monster whose level equals the encounter level for each additional PC. Otherwise, look for appropriate monsters from this adventure and the *Monster Manual* to help stiffen up the resistance.

This adventure is also designed for 3rd-level characters. As written, a group of 2nd-level characters can play through the adventure, as could a slightly larger party of 1st-level characters, but be sure to give the characters plenty of chances to take extended rests so that they can have a fair shot at surviving the expedition. For higher-level groups, adapting the adventure takes a bit more work. You'll need to add monsters and increase the treasure rewards to amounts appropriate for the characters. In all, adjusting the adventure is not too arduous, and with a little work, you can run this scenario for groups of three to eight players, and for characters of 1st through 5th level.

to harass supply trains and reinforcements bound for the fortress. The Council asked your group and the others to descend into these tunnels, clear them out, and seal them off before the main host of the enemy army arrived. For your efforts, the Council promised to pay each group 1,000 gp upon their return. Your team is to head to the old Monastery of the Sundered Chain to the southwest, where they can gain access to the tunnels below, while one group heads for Bordrin's Watch to secure those passages, and the other to Bordrin's Watch. With your mission clear, you and your companions head for the mountains to meet your destiny.

Slow Start

Rather than jumping straight into the adventure, you can extend the opening sequence to allow the adventure to unfold more naturally, giving the players the chance to develop their characters and participate in the events leading up to the adventure proper. Consider using some or all the following events summarized in the quick start.

✦ Have the characters hear about the call to arms while spending some downtime in their favorite watering hole or someplace else the characters spend a lot of time. Interested characters might do some snooping about to learn more about the nature of the threat, Bordrin's Watch, and the Stonehome Mountains. You could resolve this through roleplaying alone, portioning out information from local NPCs or other characters introduced in the previous adventure. At some point, the town council approaches the PCs and asks that they lend their support to the dwarves. Mercenary characters might engage in a social challenge to negotiate the terms of their service. This level 3 skill challenge has a complexity of 2 and uses Bluff, Diplomacy, Insight, and Intimidate as the primary skills. A success grants the characters a monetary reward (choose one or two parcels and don't use them later in the adventure). A failure results in a monetary reward (one parcel) and a general frostiness (-2 penalty to all Diplomacy checks) whenever the PCs return to Brindol.

✦ Once the characters set out from Brindol, they need to travel along the Dwarfroad or the Elsir River to reach Overlook. Along the way, they might have a few encounters in the wilderness (especially if the PCs aren't quite 3rd level when the adventure begins). Wilderness Encounters on page 23 provides several options.

✦ After a long (and possibly uneventful) journey out of the Elsir Vale, the characters stumble onto a band of orcs just outside the Westdeep. These scouts left the mountains—against orders—to do a bit of looting in the countryside. The characters face two orc raiders and five orc drudges. Astute players might realize if orcs are on this side of the mountain, perhaps this means the enemy has already breached Bordrin's Watch!

At Overlook, the adventurers are free to explore the city, resupply, and purchase new equipment. Not long after they arrive, they should learn they aren't the only adventurers in the city. In fact, the city crawls with them. Also, the Council of Elders convenes shortly after the PCs enter Overlook to discuss the threat to the city and the vale beyond, and then they summon the various adventuring groups, militias, and others to Caer Overlook (see page 10).

Once there, the PCs and other adventurers are led through a maze of corridors until they reach the High Hall. Standing on the 20-foot tall dais are the five elders. Each of the three male dwarves have long beards that hang to their feet, and two are old, being gray and wrinkled. The third is younger, with black hair and hard features. The two female elders are both attractive, one with red hair and the other with brown. All five wear the robes of their office—luxuriant purple and silver damask. Arranged beneath them, filling the chamber completely, is a motley crowd of common soldiers, militia, and adventurers, with each race and occupation represented, and most standing in small groups, but a few mingling.

Characters that met any other groups while in the city—the Freeriders, the Farstriders, or others (see page 26 for names)—should see them here as well as any other parties you design. Allow the characters to mingle with these groups as the players like, but few groups know much about what's going on and if the PCs faced orcs, they likely know more than the rest of the host. Most groups are polite, but the Farstriders drip with self-confidence bordering on arrogance.

When ready to proceed, the youngest male elder steps forward and addresses the crowd. Read or paraphrase the following text:

Welcome to High Hall friends. I am Elder Cadrick. I don't much see the point in bandying words, so I'll lay it out for you. War is upon us. A great host of orcs comes from the west. Their intention is clear. They will come through the mountains bent on slaughter. Those they spare can look forward to a short life of slavery. Overlook, and Bordrin's Watch in the mountains, have long held fast against these raids, but our scouts say never has such an army gathered. Thus, we turn to you brave souls to help defend not only Overlook, but also all the Elsir Vale.

When the orcs arrive, we're certain they will come up through the pass. We know this because already there have been attacks from the tunnels below, compromising the

fastness. The defenders have fought back the savages, but it's clear the rest are coming and fast.

So here's the plan. Durkik Forgeheart will lead the militias and most of you to bolster Bordrin's Watch. Orc trailblazers infest the tunnels below, so we've tasked their security to the Farstriders. One more mission remains, though. We need a group to evacuate the monastery on the other side of the mountains. It's dangerous work, what with the orcs and all, but priests need a warning of what's coming if they don't know already.

Do we have any volunteers?

No one steps forward to take this mission, so it falls to the PCs to do so. When they volunteer, Edgar Sommerfield, the leader of the Farstriders, angrily steps forward and says, "Should I remind the Council of our previous arrangement?" Cadrick responds with a nod and a placating gesture, thanks the PCs for their service, and dismisses the gathered crowd. The elder speaks with the Farstrider's leader for a few moments, after which Sommerfield storms out of the hall. Cadrick holds the PCs and promises them 1,000 gp upon their return. Unless the PCs have any other business, you're free to proceed with the adventure at the Monastery of the Sundered Chain described on page 27.

Troubleshooting: The PCs might be curious about the Farstriders, and a little chatting (DC 15 Streetwise) reveals the group has a storied career, having slain a black dragon, wiped out tribes of savage humanoids, recovered fabled relics, and more. Should the characters ask Cadrick about them, he mentions that the Farstriders met with the Council earlier and negotiated for the job with the most danger and glory, which is why they are descending into the mountains to secure them.

If the group doesn't step forward, you can have the Freeriders (see page 24) or another group step up instead. The Council sends the PCs to defend Bordrin's Watch. Not long after they arrive, word comes that the other group hasn't yet returned, so an officer sends the PCs to find out what happened, though with only half the reward. Assuming they don't mutiny, proceed with the Monastery as normal.

Overlook

The city of Overlook stands on the eastern slopes of the Stonehome Mountains, a hoary range of crumbling peaks as old as the world. The city's founding lies sometime far back in the mists of time, at a point after the dwarves in this region threw off the shackles of slavery and chased the giants and orcs west across the mountains at the end of the Age of Chains. Overlook, and the fastness of Bordrin's Watch, were raised to safeguard the liberated dwarf peoples and to be the first line of defense should their ancient enemies forget their defeat and seek to enslave the dwarves once more.

Since its founding, Overlook has never come under attack, though Bordrin's Watch has time and again, at least once every century. Overlook supplies the mountain pass with soldiers, supplies, and needed resources, ensuring the Watch is never without the goods they need to live up to their ancient responsibility. While doughty dwarf warriors hold the Watch, the city is far more cosmopolitan and includes peoples of nearly every race and culture known in this corner of the world. Dwarves are still the dominate group, but humans and halflings make up a close second, followed by dragonborn, tieflings, and a smattering of eladrin and elves, and an assortment of other, less familiar, races.

Overlook is largely a trading center, and people on both sides of the mountain come to the city to exchange goods, rumors, and information. The city's numerous markets and bustling streets makes it the ideal place to do business, thus characters in search of a particular tool or device are more likely to find it here than anywhere for miles around.

Supplementing its trade is a robust mining industry. The mountains are rich in iron, silver, tin, and no few gemstones. Dwarf and human miners and prospectors set out from Overlook each day, some working in the blackness of the deep mines, while others scour the heights in search of treasures—some succeeding, others failing, and others still vanishing in the misty peaks never to be seen again.

Although the city depends on Bordrin's Watch to endure most of the attacks from the west, the city is not without its own defenses. The dwarves erected steep walls to protect themselves, but as the city outgrew its original protections, the inhabitants raised more walls to encircle the growing population. So far, this has happened four times, giving the city four sets of walls, one inside of the other. The shantytown, the unofficial ninth district, grows beyond the eastern walls and it's just a matter of time before the Council decides to raise another wall and add those squatters to the rest of the city.

Piercing each wall, on both the western side and the eastern side, is a large gate flanked by two square stone towers. Most times, the gates stand open, even in the dead of night, but when trouble looms, such as now, the gates are closed at dusk, and the inner gates—the ones leading into High Hall—might close even earlier.

The outer walls are 100 feet tall,–taller where they travel over higher elevation. Each inner wall stands another 20 feet tall. Guards patrol the walls infrequently, though the gatehouses are held by a half-dozen warriors (dwarf bolters, *Monster Manual*, page 97).

Districts

Overlook has eight districts, each distinguished by the types of its people there as well as the industry one finds there.

Blister

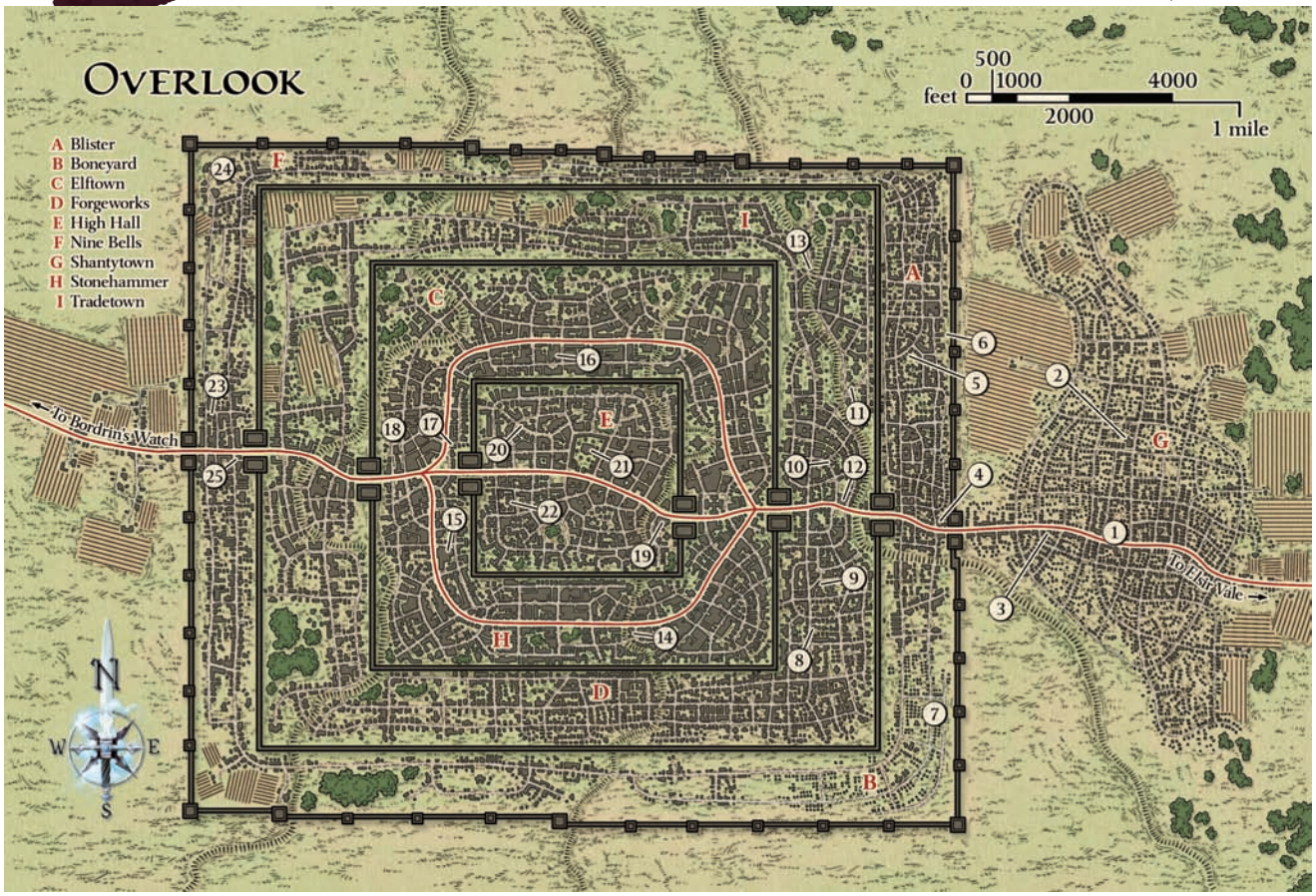
"Looking for work? You ought to prick the blister an' see what bubbles up . . ."

The Blister is a rough-and-tumble section of the city, populated by mercenaries, adventurers, and the usual sort of traveling folk with few roots. Characterized by a great number of winesinks, taverns, pleasure dens, gambling halls, and bordellos, Blister is not a place to get lost.

Buildings: Blister's buildings are a mix of timber and stone of architectural styles ranging the gamut. Old dwarven buildings stand next to almost organic tiefling dreaming halls, while a halfling gambling den sits in the shadow of an old temple dedicated to Sehanine in her more larcenous aspect.

Streets: Blister's roads thread their way through the press of buildings, darkened by shadows cast by structures built too close together. Filth and detritus clog the alleys, sometimes spilling out onto the major thoroughfares–that is, roads large enough to accommodate a horse.

People: Humans, halflings, and dragonborn have the largest numbers in Blister, though one can find a variety of races here. As mentioned, most are adventurers, thieves, and traveling folk, representing the city's most diverse population.



Sights: Visitors and inhabitants alike might see a pair of human thugs beating a half-orc with their clubs in an alley, a scantily clad man calling out to passersby, a street magician performing tricks, an elderly alchemist selling cure-alls, street preachers prophesizing the end of the world, tents and stalls, clotheslines stretched across the streets, and bands of adventurers looking for trouble.

Smells: All sorts of odors waft up from Blister, including smells of exotic cuisine to the expected stench of a crowded district. Wood smoke hangs over the streets, mixing with other, more sinister smells.

Sounds: Merchants hawk their wares amid laughter, screams, the murmur of crowds, the clatter of kitchens, cries of "thief!," the whistle of a constable in pursuit, the sounds of barking dogs, the hiss of cats, and the growls of spiretop drakes.

Boneyard

"Not much to do in the Boneyard aside from sicking up."

Occupying the southeast corner of Overlook, Boneyard has every distasteful business and venture,

including everything from the city's slaughterhouses, renderers, tanners, dyers, and even the city's graveyards.

Buildings: As an industrial corner of the city, most buildings are plain and functional, and they are constructed to serve the operation and little else.

Streets: The Boneyard features broad roads in good repair so wagons can easily navigate the district.

People: Humans are the largest group of people here and most are dirty, lacking in sophistication, and inured to the foul odors wafting up from the more toxic parts of the district.

Sights: Common sights include wagons laden with animal carcasses, workers trudging to their jobs, plumes of acrid smoke, and pipes leaking toxic fluids into the gutters. The Boneyard is as unpleasant to look at as it is to smell.

Smells: A pall of smoke stinking of urine and sulfur hangs over the Boneyard, turning the sun a pale shade of brown. Even though the locals do their best to keep the streets free of rubbish, the materials and industries produce ripe odors a shade better than death.

Sounds: One can hear the creaks of wagons, the spillage of liquids, crackling fire, the screams of animals at the slaughter, and the grunts of hard labor.

Elftown

"Don't know why they still call it Elftown; can't say as I've ever seen an elf there."

Elftown covers the northwestern corner of the inner city and takes its name from the one elf to live there some seventy years ago. The community consists of upscale and well-off entrepreneurs, merchants, bankers, lawyers, physicians, and other members of Overlook's upper crust, and many folk elsewhere want to inhabit a small house on the edge of this fine quarter.

Buildings: With fine buildings of astonishing architecture, white-washed or painted in pastel colors, Elftown has some of the nicest homes and shops in the city. Even the smaller houses are sumptuous compared to those of pretty much anywhere else in the city, and all are accented by parks, lawns of green grass, statuary, and beds of exotic flowers and semimobile plants.

Streets: Aside from the broad Dwarfroad that winds though Elftown, most streets are large enough to accommodate two carriages side by side. The roads are covered in pale white stone and maintained by a legion of well-paid servants. Even the side streets are clean and lit with everburning torches contained in iron lanterns to chase away the shadows.

People: In spite of the name, few, if any, elves live in Elftown, though several eladrin are affiliated with the ambassador who takes residence here. Instead,

OVERLOOK

This city of stone stands on the side of the Stonehome Mountains. Constructed as a haven for newly liberated dwarves from their former giant masters, Overlook has since outgrown its noble roots and become a haven for peoples all over the Elsir Vale and beyond.

Population: 12,250; about another 5,000 people live in small settlements scattered on the lower slopes. The people of Overlook are mostly dwarves, humans, and halflings, though pockets of dragonborn, tiefling, eladrin, and elf communities are isolated in their own ethnic neighborhoods. Overlook's importance as a trade center results in great numbers of travelers from faraway lands and of a wild assortment of races, cultures, and beliefs, lending the city its cosmopolitan atmosphere.

Government: The Council of Elders, a group of five male and female dwarves, governs Overlook. Each is elected to office and serves a 10-year term. The dwarves see ruling as a burden and none relish the job, preferring to hand power off to someone else. Heading up the Council is the Great Elder, Morgoff Stonefirst, an aging dwarf who's ready to retire.

One representative from each of the eight districts of Overlook attends the Council, serving as advisors and also to air the grievances of their particular constituencies. Although these individuals have the power to influence, they have no real authority in the city, though many are wealthy and powerful by means other than the office they hold.

Defense: Overlook keeps a standing garrison of 150 warriors armed and ready for any threat. In times of trouble (such as now), Overlook can muster another 500 warriors from the local militia, and another 100 from the outlying settlements. At Bordrin's Watch, another 500 hundred warriors protect the mountain pass from within its steep walls and skyscraping towers.

Districts: Blister, Boneyard, Elftown, Forgeworks, High Hall, Nine Bells, Stonehammer, Tradetown, Shantytown (unofficial).

Inns: Belden's Rest; Cadrick's Boarding House; Clean Sheets; House of Sleep; Mountain's Hearth; Polliver's; the Turned Spoon; and numerous others.

Taverns: Coxcomb Spirits; Dergan's XXX Brewery; Michael's Blond; Pickled Imp; Pig and Bucket; the Salty Mug; and numerous others.

Supplies: Dungeoneer's Survival Emporium; Elsir Consortium; Merty's; Stonehome Treasures.

Temples: Divine Knot (various); Shrine of Erathis; Stone Anvil (Moradin).

wealthy humans and dwarves command this section of the city, though one can be sure to find a handful of dragonborn, a smattering of tieflings, and a few reckless halflings.

Sights: Observers can see black carriages pulled by teams of matching horses, patrols of uniformed guards, and fountains sending spray into the air, as well as servants painting houses, cleaning the streets, and avoiding attention.

Smells: One is likely to smell fine cooking, fresh-cut grass, the perfume of brilliant flowers, incense, and other pleasant aromas.

Sounds: Notes played on a harp, the singing of a lovely young woman (or a younger man), a haughty noble screaming at a servant, the whinny of horses, and the clink of gold are common sounds.

Forgeworks

"Let me tell you about this place I know. If you're looking for armor, I can think of nowhere better to go."

The Forgeworks, or just the Forge, is a middle-class district given over to successful artisans, tradesfolk, and other men and women who work hard and are successful in their professions. More than half of the buildings here are workshops with apartments overhead. Warehouses, businesses, stables, and other places of industry round out the rest. The Forgeworks stands in the Middle City, south of Tradetown.

Buildings: Small shops with flats above line the streets, punctuated with the occasional tavern, shrine to Moradin or Erathis, and speckled with overlarge warehouses.

Streets: Broad streets, wide enough to accommodate aurochs and wagons, run through this district, while narrow alleys branch off to disappear in the maze of buildings beyond. Cobbles cover the ground and most are even to provide smooth transport to and from the Forge.

People: Dwarves and humans live side by side in the Forgeworks, but one can also find a small population of half-elves, gnomes, and a few others as well. During the day, business here brings folk from all over the city to do business.

Sights: Blacksmiths hard at work at their forges, weavers chatting while working their looms, painters, tailors, and a host of other shops and business, all produce goods for the citizens of Overlook and beyond.

Smells: The air is pregnant with the smells of sweat, smoke, and industry. Street vendors sell meat pies, sausages, and other portable foods for workers and visitors alike, lending the pleasant (or not so pleasant) aromas of their fare to the atmosphere. Although a busy part of Overlook, the Forgeworks is surprisingly clean.

Sounds: Frequent sounds are hammers on anvils, a sharp curse, the hum of conversation, wagons creaking, aurochs straining in their traces, and the sound of footfalls from passersby.

High Hall

"The heart and soul of Overlook, son, High Hall is where the movers and shakers make all the decisions."

High Hall, or the Old City, is where the city leaders convene to govern Overlook. Few folk still live in High Hall since nearly every inch of available space is given over to the various ministries making up the city's government. Thus, aside from a few extremely wealthy folks, most people funnel out of High Hall at the end of the day to head home to Elftown, Stonehammer, or elsewhere.

Buildings: High Hall consists of a forest of massive buildings packed tightly inside its walls. Towers thrust up from the fortresslike structures, climbing high above the walls and affording a look at the entire city and the lands all around. Most buildings house one of the dozen or so ministries that see to keeping the city operating. Examples include the Ministry of Commerce, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of War, and so on. Each operates out of a marble or brick building fronted by impressive statues of dwarf warriors, artisans, and historical figures, while the walls themselves bear intricate carvings and basreliefs capturing key moments from the city's history.

The outer edge of High Hall holds the businesses and few homes of those who grease the engines of politics. Restaurants, inns, and a few shops provide patronage to the city's elite, but they shut down at nightfall.

Streets: Suffering from too many buildings in a confined space, High Hall's roads are positively perilous. Tight and cramped while winding through the heart of Overlook, they contain numerous shadowy alcoves, dead-ends, and limited range of sight as they turn and twist. Although High Hall doesn't have a thievery problem, it does suffer from hired killers. The dwarves deal honorably with one another, but the same cannot be said for all the city's representatives, and rival humans, tieflings, and others might resort to murder to eliminate an inflexible politician. Thus, most high-ranking officials surround themselves with guards, making travel anywhere in High Hall all the harder.

People: The Council of Elders might all be dwarves, but the rest of the city's government is as diverse as the city. Bureaucrats, functionaries, messengers, and palanquins bearing representatives from other districts all make their way through High Hall throughout the day, and sometimes at night.

Sights: Buildings, buildings, and more buildings crowd the district, their carved façades telling ancient stories of heroic dwarves, the end of the Age of Chains, and other historical events that helped shape this region. One might see workers cleaning up a murder scene, while street vendors sell everything from amulets that promise to bring good luck in the courts, to food dealers, and tattered street lawyers searching for clients.

Smells: Overcrowding and the malaise of too many people gives High Hall an unpleasant aroma in spite of the fact that the Council spares no expense in keeping this part of the city clean. Wafting up from the streets is a mix of rubbish, food, and sweat, but compared to other sections of Overlook, High Hall is tolerable.

Sounds: Throughout the day, a steady hum of conversation sounds, punctuated with the ringing of bells, the angry shouts of guards as they escort their worthy charges through the press of people, voices raised in protest at some new law, and an assortment of other noises make High Hall loud. At night, however, it becomes deathly quiet.

Nine Bells

"Nine Bells, Nine Hells, all the same to me."

Nine Bells district takes its name for the nine temples found in the heart of the district. Since these temples cater to the sick and the poor, this district draws the hungry, the diseased, and the destitute to its streets. Before the walls were raised here, Nine Bells was a place of great wealth—a community favored by those rich citizens who wanted to escape the clamor of the city. However, after it was annexed along with Blister and the Boneyard, the estates were abandoned and the folks fled to Stonehammer or Elftown to escape the flood of destitute people that washed into the place. Now, Nine Bells is the worst part of the city and is ever a source of embarrassment for the city's elite.

Buildings: With rotting estates, old vineyards now overrun by tents and wooden shacks, sagging rowhouses, and communities of tents, Nine Bells decays even while the rest of the city grows strong. The businesses, such as they are, cater to darker interests, including dreaming halls, sinister taverns, fighting pits, and disease-ridden brothels. Huddled in one corner of this district are nine great temples, raised long ago, but faced, on all sides, by poverty, despair, and the worst sorts of people imaginable. Called the Divine Knot, a few of these temples have been abandoned, while the rest keep small staffs of dedicated servants who soldier on to fight the misery plaguing this district.

Streets: As one might expect, Nine Bells' streets are muddy lanes and narrow alleys, all filthy and most worming through the press of decaying buildings. Closest to the temples, the muddy roads gain cobbles, typically clean and free of debris.

People: Nine Bells is the bottom of the barrel, so to speak, and it welcomes anyone who has nowhere

else to go. Humans, dwarves, tieflings, halflings, gnomes, and even a few half-orcs scratch out an existence in this wretched mire. Despair is strong here and it drives many of its people to commit unspeakable acts to survive. Drugs, prostitution, and even slavery can all be found here.

Sights: A dead dog rotting in the streets, a swarm of rats cornering a gaunt gnome in a darkened alley, a hideous crone hobbling under the weight of her scavenged scraps, a gang of children armed with sharp knives and hungry eyes, and a robed priest swinging a smoking censer to chase away the spirits can all be found in Nine Bells.

Smells: A fecal stench hangs in the air, mixed with the equally nauseating odors of vomit, rot, and rubbish. People here are unclean and their odors mingle with that of the befouled air to create a symphony of noxious odors. Nearest to the temples, the air grows a bit more tolerable thanks to incense and the modicum of respect the people show the men and women of the cloth.

Sounds: Within this area, one can hear mad laughter echoing out of a darkened ally, a woman's cry, a wailing child, the sound of flies devouring an abandoned carcass, the splash of effluvia, and the whisper of a threat.

Stonehammer

"There's a different kind of stench in Stonehammer . . . it's the stench of arrogance."

Stonehammer occupies the southern half of the inner city, and it wraps around High Hall up to the Dwarfroad. Like Elftown, Stonehammer is home to the wealthy citizens of Overlook, specifically the dwarves. Since this district is cleaner, safer, and more exclusive than other parts of the city, great deal of resentment exists toward the folks of Stonehammer from those of lower means and status.

Buildings: Stonehammer is the most dwarven of districts, and its buildings are grand, sweeping, and magnificent to behold. Towers that thrust up from lower levels rival those found in High Hall in terms of height and grandeur. Since space is at a premium, the dwarves here have built upward. The wealthiest citizens live in the aeries, while servants, low-born dwarves, and all those who support the sumptuous lifestyles of the elite dwell in the 'Dark—the bowels of Stonehammer.

Streets: The towers feature wide, sturdy bridges of stone, each fitted with high railings to prevent accidents and equipped with everburning torches for safety. In the 'Dark, the roads are tight and twisting, threading around the towers' bases, and plunged in nearly perpetual darkness.

People: Stonehammer is exclusively a dwarven district and nondwarves are not permitted to live here. Other races often work in the 'Dark, but even they must keep their residences outside the district. Folk here are wealthy and powerful, and they represent the best the city has to offer.

Sights: A knot of dwarf priests bestow blessings on a newly completed bridge, a palanquin borne by a dozen human thralls bears a dwarf lady to an upscale market, a pompous dwarf aristocrat waxes on about his successful ventures in Tradetown, and stern-faced guards armed with halberds block access into the innards of an impressive tower.

Smells: None; the air is clean, although a breeze might push the fetid odors from the rest of the city, but such occasions are rare and brief. In the 'Dark, dust, sweat, and wood smoke fill the air, tinged with a faint chemical smell.

Sounds: Deep, resonating laughter, the bass voice of a dwarf noble, the grunt of a thrall bearing the weight of his charge, the hiss of a spiretop drake, and the sounds of good living permeate the district.

Tradetown

"Have a care in Tradetown, son. You can go there with a full purse and come out with nothing more than a pail of beans."

Tradetown is a melting pot of all races, cultures, and occupations. In many ways, Tradetown is a lot like the Blister, but it has been established for longer and it has a mix of fabulous wealth and appalling poverty. Tradetown, as one might expect, is a commercial and retail district, where merchants, tradesfolk, and prospectors come to do business. Most middle-tier business-inclined people have homes here and gather in coffee houses, upscale bars, and bathhouses to do business. In stark contrast to the bustling commerce, Tradetown is also home to a powerful thieving guild named the Lost Ones. A clandestine organization, they have agreements with nearly all the major enterprises here, offering protection (or rather exemption) from thievery and the promise to leave their customers alone.

Buildings: Tradetown is a hodgepodge of stone buildings (many of dwarven architecture), wooden structures, warehouses, shops, inns, taverns, and everything and anything a person might want in a city of this size.

Streets: Tradetown is every bit as cramped as the Blister and in some ways more so for the vendors and hawkers crowding the streets. Moving merchandise into Tradetown is a chore and often requires porters rather than wagons to transport anything of size. The

roads are cobbled, but alleys and side-streets might be muddy and covered in rubbish.

People: Tradetown is home to a dizzying number of people, from elves and eladrin to lumbering half-orcs and goliaths. Humans and gnomes rub elbows in taverns, while dwarves of low character might engage in backroom deals with sinister tieflings.

Sights: Merchants line the roads, selling an assortment of goods that range from magic items, ritual ingredients, and curiosities, to common goods such as pots, pans, cutlery, trade goods, and everything in between. Shady men and women walk the streets, eyes in constant motion as they search for new marks, while grifters and charlatans peddle cure-alls or use trickery to part their customers from their coin. Urchins run through the alleys, leading visitors through the safer parts of Tradetown, while disguised halflings lead other visitors to the nastier corners, where the travelers can find beatings and robberies instead of their destinations.

Smells: An unsettling mixture of roasting meats, beer, ale, and spices blends with excrement, sweat, and the strange odors of illegal substances, wreathing the district in a perpetual haze.

Sounds: One can hear woman's laughter, a dragonborn's growl, an argument, a shout of "thief!," children playing, a yelping dog, a persistent merchant's pitch, and the whispered invitations from second-story rooms overlooking the narrow streets.

Shantytown

"You think Nine Bells is bad? Spend a night in the Shantytown."

Not a true district, Shantytown clings to the back of the city like festering boil. Shantytown is a wretched maze of tents, shacks, and rotting wooden buildings, and it is home to the poorest and most desperate of people that have nowhere else to go. Most of Shantytown's people are refugees from other lands, victims of tragedy and circumstance, or exiles who keep a low profile so they can go about their wicked business without attracting attention. Thus, Shantytown's people are beggars, destitute farmers, maimed adventurers, undead, necromancers, cultists, and worse, all thrown together in one of the most desperate spots in the region.

Buildings: Tents and lean-tos make up the majority of "buildings" in Shantytown, though some wooden structures rise up from the mess like islands in a sea of misery.

Streets: Little better than muddy paths wending through heaps of debris and filth, no one is sure if the mud is actually mud. . . .

People: People of all races and from all lands live here, though humans appear to be the most numerous. Most have hard luck stories, but a few live here by choice—for easy hunting or to escape notice.

Sights: One can see a filthy child screaming in the middle of a street, a flock of chickens fleeing from a hungry cat, a brown-clad cultist with a rat skull on a thong around his neck, a shrine dedicated to a sinister god, and a bloated corpse ripening in the sun.

Smells: Filth, filth, and more filth—the stench of Shantytown is staggering.

Sounds: Within this area one can hear laughter and crying, moans and sighs, the squelch of footfalls, the grunt of pain, the short shriek of butchered animal, the howl of a dog in pain.

Key Locations

The districts are broadly described so you can stock them with shops, temples, and inns as you need, but a few locations warrant mentioning. Each entry corresponds with a location shown on the Overlook map.

1. Dwarfroad

The old Dwarfroad emerges from the Elsir Vale and climbs the slopes of the Stonehome Mountains, moving through Overlook and ascending up to Bordrin's Watch and down the other side into the badlands beyond. The old road is far older than Overlook, having been paved during the Age of Chains by dwarf slaves for their giant masters. After the dwarves successfully rebelled, the Dwarfroad served as a primary trade route for the old dwarven kingdom that followed, but over the last century or so, goblins, bandits, and worse, have made travel along it perilous. Still, closer to Overlook, the road is somewhat safe and folk near the city still make use of it.

2. The Gray Redoubt of Rufus Crumley

The so-called "gray redoubt" is a leaning tower of gray and black stone that has the dubious distinction of being the tallest structure in Shantytown. Speculated as being as old as the city, the tower has had many owners over the centuries, but is currently the home to one Rufus Crumley.

A dabbler in necromancy and the dark arts, Crumley is a wildly unpopular figure in the Shantytown, but powerful enough that no one dares report him to the authorities. For the most part, Crumley keeps to himself, working in his laboratory to master the secrets of undeath and foul magic. It's whispered that undead horrors guard the tower, so not even the thieves of the "district" dare attempt burglary. It's well known that Crumley pays good gold for cadavers and

Rufus Crumley	Level 9 Elite Controller
Medium natural humanoid, human	XP 800
Initiative +7	**Senses** Perception +8
HP 188; **Bloodied** 94	
AC 25; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 22	
Saving Throws +2	
Speed 6	
Action Points 1	
Dagger (standard; at-will) **Poison, Weapon**	
+13 vs. AC; 1d4 + 3 damage, and ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).	
Ray of Rot (standard; at-will) **Necrotic**	
Ranged 10; +13 vs. Fortitude; 1d6 + 6 necrotic damage, and the target is slowed until the end of Rufus's next turn.	
A Grave Wind (standard; recharge ⚄ ⁞⁞) **Necrotic**	
Area burst 2 within 10; +14 vs. Fortitude; 2d8 + 6 necrotic damage. A swirling cloud of souls appears in the area and remains until the end of Rufus's next turn. It grants concealment, and any creature that starts its turn in the area takes 6 necrotic damage.	
Invisibility (standard; sustain: standard; encounter) **Illusion**	
Rufus can turn invisible until the end of his next turn.	
Alignment Evil	**Languages** Common, Infernal, Supernal
Skills Arcana +16, Religion +13	
Str 11 (+4)	**Dex** 16 (+7) **Wis** 19 (+8)
Con 14 (+6)	**Int** 22 (+10) **Cha** 14 (+6)
Equipment patched robes, dagger, staff	

is knowledgeable in a few rituals useful for removing afflictions, and, if it can believed, thwart death.

DM Tip: Although Rufus deals in black magic, he doesn't pose much of a threat to Overlook since his work is largely theoretical. Should the PCs need discreet healing for an ailment or death, Rufus provides it with no questions asked, making him a useful, if shady ally.

3. Clean Sheets

A sagging, rotting building leaning out over the old Dwarfroad, this inn hasn't had clean sheets since it first opened for business a decade ago. What it does offer is shelter and a suspicious meal. Clean Sheets' accommodations include a pair of private rooms, or a cot in a large common room in the attic. The main floor consists of a kitchen and dining hall where a patron can buy a burned or undercooked meal, tepid beer, and cloudy water for a reasonable price.

DM's Tip: Yerrin Dalovoy, a halfling with a wicked scar on his left cheek, runs the place, having won it in a game of *Three Dragon Ante* a few years back. He uses the inn as a front to smuggle drugs and poisons into Overlook, supplying his contacts in the Lost Folk with useful commodities for their criminal interests.

4. Mountain's Hearth

Just inside the east gates and facing the old Dwarfroad is a three-story inn named the Mountain's Hearth. Famed for its clean and neat accommodations, fine meals, and pleasant staff, the Hearth is one of the more popular stops in Overlook. The dwarf matron Reggen runs the place like clockwork, and her persistence and dedication has paid off. Unfortunately, the Lost Folk have been putting pressure on her to pay for protection. So far, she has resisted and has paid the price for her refusal in the vandalism and dark threats she has endured. She'd pay well if someone could get these thugs off her back.

5. Pig and Bucket

One of the Blister's most famous dives, the Pig and Bucket is a one-story tavern squashed between two boarding houses of ill-repute. Most of the tavern consists of the beer hall, where booths line the walls, and row tables and benches fill the open area in the center. A wooden bar, replete with names and curses carved onto its surface, runs along the back wall, where a dozen casks hold a variety of beers.

Adventurers and mercenaries loiter in the Pig and Bucket, because it's a good place to find work and exchange news. Merchants, wizards, and shady types drift in and out the bat-wing doors day or night, so one doesn't have to wait long before someone blows in with a job offer. Kyle Rester cultivates this atmosphere since he was an adventurer in his youth. His bright red hair has gone to gray and his freckled face is creased and wrinkled with age, but he's competent and knows his way around a sword.

6. Dungeoneer's Survival Emporium

A narrow building, but deep, the Dungeoneer's Survival Emporium is a general store specializing in common goods such as rope, packs, tents, and bedrolls—all available for reasonable prices. The shop doesn't deal in weapons or armor, but if a customer flirts enough with Myra Edgerton, a half-elf of prodigious size, he might just gain access to the store of wondrous items she has collected over the years.

DM's Tip: Myra is in fact a doppelganger assassin (*Monster Manual*, page 71) and uses her cover to avert suspicion toward her nocturnal ventures. She's careful to conceal her true nature, and she acts as a facilitator for those needing a discreet blade, claiming she knows people, when in fact, she is the "people."

7. Tombs

Adventurers don't have much reason to explore the Boneyard unless they're in need of leathers, dyes, or a funeral service. In fact, the thing that brings most people to the Boneyard is the Tombs, Overlook's old graveyard. As large above ground as it is below, Tombs contains the burial vaults for citizens dating back to the city's founding. The city eventually swallowed it

up when it annexed the Boneyard a hundred years ago. For as much as the groundskeepers maintain Tombs, the cemetery is a grim and foreboding place, aided by the overlarge temple of the Raven Queen that crouches in the heart of the maze of headstones, vaults, and crypts.

DM's Tip: Although not advertised, Tombs loses a dozen cadavers every year. No one is sure where they go or if there are robbers about, but the attendants—who leave much to be desired in their vigilance—see the loss as acceptable.

8. Dergan's XXX Brewery

Dergan's XXX Brewery is home of Dergan's XXX Stout, a full-bodied black lager brewed using a recipe passed down through a dozen generations of dwarf brewmasters. The current brewer is a dwarf by the name of Forsworth Clangman, and he takes pride in continuing his family's tradition. The Brewery is beloved by laborers throughout the Forgeworks, and off-duty workers come each day to drink away their wages in the comfort of this dark tavern and brewery.

9. Stonehome Treasures

Mikal Rensfield runs Stonehome Treasures, an unassuming shop specializing in selling goods produced in and around Overlook. Rensfield, an enterprising human merchant, solicits finished materials from artisans in the city and from the outlying villages and turns them around for a profit in the Forgeworks. His merchandise is an eclectic mix of mundane equipment, weapons, armor, and a smattering of magic items he has picked up for a steal from local explorers. Treasures, as it's often called, does a brisk business in the city, and adventurers of discerning taste shop here exclusively.

10. Belden's Rest

An adorable elderly couple runs Belden's Rest. Rory Teng, human, and his wife Ruth, half-elf, have operated the inn since it was first built, and the inn has a reputation for its comfortable rooms, excellent food, and courteous staff. Prices are reasonable and the owners find new ways to surprise and please their guests during their stay. The inn consists of a lounge and restaurant on the main floor, with the upper two floors given over to private rooms. They're best known for their pressed duck.

DM's Tip: Rory and his wife are secret cultists of Asmodeus and the couple keeps a shrine to the dark god in a secret room attached to their cellar. On (un)holy days, they and their fellow dedicates gather beneath the inn to perform blood sacrifices to their master. They hide their activities well, but the fact that tieflings stay here for free is a big clue to where their loyalties truly lie.

11. The Salty Mug

This tavern nestles between the steep cliff that runs through the Tradetown and the middle wall, so the sun shines upon the building only in the middle of the day. The rest of time, shadows cloak the place, providing a fitting atmosphere for a haven of thieves and scum. Founded a dozen years ago by an ex-pirate named Kyne, the Salty Mug immediately attracted the worst sort of clientele—prostitutes, thugs, murderers, thieves, and, of course, adventurers. Fights break out here all the time and murders are common enough that when a stabbing occurs, the bartender—a brutish hobgoblin named Krunk, collects the body and sells it to the renderer the next morning.

In spite of the danger, the Salty Mug is a good place to pick up rumors and happenings in the city. People haunting its booths are connected and they keep a finger on the pulse of the city.

12. Merty's

This gaudy shop fronts the old Dwarfroad as it passes between Tradetown and Forgeworks. The place is painted in pastel colors and big glass windows in the front display adventurers battling with papier-mâché monsters. Merty's sells a variety of gear and equipment, all for 150% above the normal prices. What the place lacks in good deals, it more than makes up for in variety, making this shop an excellent choice for adventurers looking to track down ingredients, magic items, and other hard-to-find gear. A halfling named Riley Swifttoe owns the place and keeps a gnome artificer on hand to put together custom goods.

13. Shrine of Erathis

In the heart of Tradetown stands a small shrine dedicated to Erathis. Little more than a covered altar, littered with stubs of incense and scraps of paper containing prayers offered up by locals for good fortune, and a large idol of the goddess looking off to the horizon, people come here throughout the day or night. A gentle old woman named Haelyn attends the shrine and accepts tithes from penitents and those seeking the deity's blessings. Haelyn might know a few rituals to remove afflictions, but she is not, in fact, a cleric.

14. Coxcomb Spirits

A proud rooster adorns a hanging sign above the entrance to Coxcomb Spirits. More restaurant than tavern, Coxcomb Spirits offers a fine selection of wines, beers, ales, and liquors to accompany the artful meals prepared by Chef Drebben. The Spirits

caters mostly to the city's elite, and a nonpolitician might wait for months for reservations.

Ironically, a ghost in its cellar haunts the Spirits. Drebben has contained the unruly and unwanted guest by arranging holy symbols around its lair, but he fears his solution is temporary at best. He'd hire someone to clear out the ghost, but fears it would be bad for business.

15. Stone Anvil

Easily one of the largest buildings in Overlook, Stone Anvil is a grand cathedral dedicated to Moradin. The church's foundation extends deep into the earth, where copyists work to transcribe the holy texts of Moradin, write holy books, and compile ritual books for the clergy. Some say these cavernous vaults hold far more than the legion of scribes and that ancient relics from the Age of Chains are buried in the deepest of vaults.

Above, stone walls assembled from blocks of stone larger than many homes climb far above the bridges and buildings of Stonehammer. Its uppermost levels are studded with leaded windows that sparkle in the sun, each of which is shaped to resemble hammers. Doors to the worship hall rise 40 feet and require six dwarves to open or close them such is their great weight.

The Stone Anvil is open to all who would pay homage to Moradin, but its placement in the city as well as an unwelcoming atmosphere results in its congregation being nearly all dwarves. The current high priest is Durkik Forgeheart, and he has served three decades. Durkik, a dwarf, began his career as a pious servant of his god, but years of corruption, wealth, and status have chipped away at his idealism, leaving him grasping and opportunistic, which makes him little better than any of the bureaucrats choking the life from the city.

16. House of Sleep

The House of Sleep specializes in exemplary service and keeps out unwanted guests with its exorbitant prices. A great tower that stands seven stories tall and is pierced with so many arched windows, the building appears as if it has more glass than stone in its construction. The House offers private accommodations only; each suite of pleasant rooms includes a small kitchen, lounge, and bedroom, as well as the service of two servants who see to the guest's every need.

Kalaban Whisperwind, an eladrin expatriate, owns the House of Sleep and dotes on his guests. A cultured and educated man, his life is one of service. Those who can afford a room here are never disappointed.

17. The Turned Spoon

The Turned Spoon is a quaint restaurant on the southern edge of Elftown. Founded by a cadre of halfling chefs from the riverlands to the south, they offer a large menu and a dizzying array of spirits. The restaurant is comfortable, with padded chairs and low tables. Deemed a romantic spot by the elite, and the epitome of excess by everyone else, the Turned Spoon offers large meals of unimpeachable quality.

18. Elsir Consortium

Forty years ago, a group of merchants set aside their differences and combined their businesses to found the Elsir Consortium. Their unified front allowed them to expand their individual markets to nearly every community in the Elsir Vale until a decade later, and they have emerged as one of the most powerful commercial forces in the region. Ever since, the Consortium has only grown larger and more successful, which is a fact not lost on the folk of Tradetown and elsewhere who have begun to resent the Consortium's influence.

Overlook houses the Consortium's warehouses and production facilities in Elftown. Fronting these buildings is a small shop that provides goods, weapons, armor, and other materials (none of which is magical) at a 10% discount below those prices listed in the *Player's Handbook*.

DM's Tip: The Consortium is indeed a powerful merchant conglomerate, but its interests extend much further than moving mundane goods around the Elsir Vale. The Consortium has turned hungry eyes at a bigger prize; they hope to oust the ruling Council and install a government friendlier to the Consortium's interests, preferably consisting of individuals handpicked by the merchants. A small cadre believes the coming conflict will be good for them, since they expect that a disastrous defeat at Bordrin's Watch will weaken the Council's influence and open the door for a coup. When this occurs, the Consortium intends to move in with their mercenary soldiers, which are hidden throughout the city, seize the government, and shatter the orc armies themselves.

19. Polliver's

Polliver's is a small inn and club used by visiting officials and for local officials in need of clandestine meetings. A large building, four stories tall, it sits atop a tower near the eastern gate into the High Hall. Tall glass windows face out on all sides, with burgundy curtains inside that can drawn closed for privacy, while a pair of golden griffons stands watch to either side of the bronzed doors. The inside is just as grand

as the outside, with high ceilings, patterned floors in priceless woods, and a legion of servants that cater to their guests. Large rooms, on scale with those found in the House of Sleep, fill the upper levels, while a bar, restaurant, game room, and smoking lounge fill out the main floor.

Officials and envoys use Polliver's to conduct private meetings, to make secret deals, andto chart the course for the future of Overlook. As such, membership is gained by not only circumstances of birth and wealth, but also for a candidate's discretion. Being a member of Polliver's is an expense many in Overlook find worthwhile.

20. Michael's Blond

In stark contrast to Polliver's and the other pricey establishments in High Hall and Stonehammer, Michael's Blond is a down-to-earth tavern that specializes in serving the working class, offering honest fare, good brew, and a comfortable environment all for a modest fee. Few officials would sully their names by having dinner here, but those looking for information on the elite might pry a few secrets from disgruntled servants deep in their cups.

21. Caer Overlook (Government)

Rising above all the other districts and buildings in the city is Caer Overlook, a sprawling fortress of stone hauled out from the depths of the earth from the very mines the dwarves excavated during the dark days of their enslavement. The castle consists of eight round towers arranged in a star pattern surrounding a central keep capped with a domed roof. Hedging in all the towers and the keep is another stone wall, taller than the wall bounding the High Hall, and it raises 200-feet tall.

If the scale were not impressive enough, the architecture in the details establishes the fortress as one of the greatest in the lands. Carvings, engravings, and bas-reliefs adorn the walls, capturing moments of dwarven history and inscribing those grudges to which all dwarves still cling. Scrollwork bears threats and promises, vows of vengeance against orcs, giants, and anyone or anything else that had wronged these people.

Inside, the same degree of artistry appears throughout the building, from the brilliant tapestries to the inlaid stone work covering the floors, and statues of the courageous Firstborn who sacrificed their lives to liberate their kin. All this, inside and out, pales before the brilliant majesty of the Council Chamber: the High Hall. This magnificent room measures 200 feet in diameter with a great dome overhead. A dais, raised 20 feet above the echoing chamber, holds the five high-backed chairs for the councilors. The floor around the dais is polished to a mirror finish to reflect the mural on the dome overhead. In it, one can see an artist's rendition of Moradin's wrath against the primordials, telling the story of the god's gift, the betrayal, the Age of Chains, and culminating in the dwarves' liberation.

Caer Overlook provides quarters for the elders as well as smaller apartments for the districts' representatives and their families. Each is a sumptuous room with high ceilings and marble floors. Fireplaces large enough for a grown man to stand hold roaring fires, heating the entire castle through a feat of engineering, while everburning torches illuminate the halls and chambers with a soft white light. Few, however, have the chance to behold the splendor of this place, since the guardians protecting the councilors are vigilant in safeguarding the private rooms and inner vaults.

22. Ministry of War

The Ministry of War is more compound than single structure, consisting of six buildings arranged inside a walled-in courtyard. Three buildings are barracks for the garrison that protects and patrols the city. The fourth serves as an armory and smithy, producing weapons, ammunition, and armor for recruits. The fifth building houses the officers quarters, while the sixth contains the officers of the War Minister.

The Ministry of War produces both soldiers and watchmembers, and their training regimens are nearly identical. The Ministry accepts most candidates provided they are fit and able, but it allocates recruits to the city watch or garrison. Some candidates, no matter how eager, are refused. Topping the list are gnomes, any goblinoids (reformed or not), orcs (and their kin), and any other individual that lacks the strength, discipline, or ethical substance to serve.

DM's Tip: Rumors tell of a third branch of the Ministry of War, a covert group of operatives that combine teams of individuals with untraditional talents, such as wizards, warlocks, and others. If such a group exists, the Council and the Ministry both deny their existence.

23. Cadrick's Boarding House

When other districts provide lodgings, one might wonder why anyone would rent a room in the Nine Bells. There are few good reasons and those who do seek out a place to stay here are either too poor or too desperate to hunker down anywhere else, or, worse, need or have to keep a low profile. In any event, Cadrick's Boarding House welcomes any and all

inside its mildewed walls, offering dirt cheap rates that even include a loaf of bread (with crunchies!) and a pail of murky water. One never fears being alone in the rooms, because lice, fleas, and other vermin infest the straw mattress beneath stained sheets. No detail is spared in this interesting place, with peeling wallpaper revealing swathes of black, quivering mold, clouds of flies, and spiders so big, a shoe large enough has not been cobbled to silence their scuttling.

Wendell the Sott owns the Boarding House and is not sure who Cadrick was, though he'll tell you he did at one time if he can be sobered up long enough to reply. An army of sycophants and hangers-on lurk in the shadows of this building, taking residence here thanks to Wendell's good graces or his obliviousness.

DM's Tip: The folk loitering around Cadrick's Boarding House are a band of a rabble-rousers and agitators—anarchists that want to see the Council dissolved and laws removed, letting the city go back to a more natural state. They hide their intentions and their purpose well, except for the bits of graffiti that show up all around the inn, with such profundity as "Dwarves suck! Orcs Rool!" and "Armen wuz here." Clearly, this group is disorganized and doomed to failure, but if an individual could unite them and give them some direction, there are enough of them to be dangerous.

24. Divine Knot

The Divine Knot is the name given to the nine temples filling out the northwest corner of the Nine Bells district. Each temple is a grand house of worship designed to honor the gods, but is marred by the squalor and filth contaminating this district. For years, the priests worked to clean up their environs but frequent failures have chipped away at their resolve, leading a few of the temples to close their doors (specifically Ioun, Moradin, and Pelor). The rest—Avandra, Bahamut, Erathis, Kord, the Raven Queen, and, oddly, Zehir—remain, but with small clergies and smaller congregations.

25. Pickled Imp

The Pickled Imp is an infamous tavern located just inside the Nine Bells. Taking its name from the large jar containing a dead imp suspended in brown fluid sitting proudly on the old wooden bar, the Pickled Imp is no place for the meek. Tucked away on a side street a few blocks away from the western gates, the Pickled Imp squats at the end of a foul alley, which is littered with slop tossed from the windows of tenements on all sides. The favored watering hole of beggars, storytellers, vagabonds, madmen, and shiftless folk, the Pickled Imp provides watery wine and a bitter yellow fluid that passes for beer. Fights are common, and in the cellar, the Imp's patrons can watch kobolds fight brutal death matches.

Urban Encounters

Between expeditions, the characters can retreat to Overlook to rest and recover, to acquire rituals and gear, or gather additional information. While in the city, you can use any of the following encounters to make their time in the city more interesting.

Anarchists (Level 1; XP 498)

- 2 human bandits (level 2 skirmisher; *Monster Manual*, page 162)
- 8 human rabble (level 2 minion; *Monster Manual*, page 162)

Fear about the orc army spreads through Overlook like a cancer, but it also emboldens groups who see the confusion and chaos as a singular opportunity for mischief. A group of anarchists emerges from Nine Bells to cause trouble in a higher-class district.

Outraged Drakes (Level 1; XP 500)

- 5 spiretop drakes (level 1 skirmisher; *Monster Manual*, page 90)

Years ago, Overlook brought in spiretop drakes to control the growing rat problem. It worked, but now the drakes are everywhere. Generally, the drakes are comfortable enough around humanoid races, but if their eggs are disturbed, they can become fierce, as in the case of this clutch. An enterprising thief sought to snatch a few eggs and turn a profit outside the city and for his trouble, he found death instead of gold.

Pressgangs (Level 1; XP 524)

- 2 halfling thieves (level 2 skirmisher; *Monster Manual*, page 152)
- 2 human lackeys (level 7 minion; *Monster Manual*, page 162)
- 4 human rabble (level 2 minion; *Monster Manual*, page 162)

Overlook has sounded the call to war, and many people have answered without the need of having to pressgang folk into service. A few gangs, however, emerged from Nine Bells, Blister, and the Boneyard, and they now roam the streets, ambushing anyone they find in the name of patriotism and delivering their bloody charges to the Ministry of War for fresh recruits.

Lost Ones (Level 2; XP 675)

- 1 human mage (level 4 artillery; *Monster Manual*, page 163)
- 4 human bandits (level 2 skirmisher; *Monster Manual*, page 162)

The characters stumble onto a group of Lost Ones intimidating a shop owner into coughing up gold for "protection." These enforcers respond with violence to any interference, but they scatter if the mage is taken out. Henceforth, the PCs gain the Lost Ones as enemies, and during the adventurers' stay, they discover that some shops and taverns refuse them service and that their steps are dogged by gangs of these criminals.

Mysterious Killers (Level 3; XP 750)

- 2 doppelganger sneaks (level 3 skirmisher; *Monster Manual*, page 71)
- 3 human guards (level 3 soldier; *Monster Manual*, page 162)

While moving through the city, the PCs come upon a vicious fight in a darkened alley. There, the attackers are finishing up slaughtering another group of adventurers. Should the PCs defeat the attackers, they find on them a list of names, some unknown, others known, including those of the Freeriders (see page 24) and four of the five player characters. These killers were hired by a mysterious agency in the city who's working to eliminate potential problems as his plans unfold. A future adventure can provide greater revelations in this sinister plot.

Beyond Overlook

Overlook is one of the most interesting features of the Stonehome Mountains, but it isn't the only one. Ruins of the old dwarven kingdom dot the peaks for hundreds of miles to the north and south, while old caves lead to tunnels worming through the rock. Closest to the Overlook, though, the land is safer and is home to numerous villages and other places of interest.

Armistice: Purported to be the site of victory of the giants and orcs, here the freed dwarves signed a compact of peace that would bind them into one nation. Now the kingdom is no more, so Armistice is just a relic of the past filled with old codgers who think back on better days.

Bordrin's Watch: Straddling the old Dwarfroad is a mighty fortress that was raised to control traffic across the mountains and protect the Elsir Vale from attack. Bordrin's Watch contains one of the three access points to the tunnels beneath the mountains. The stronghold consists of a long wall, which is 150-feet tall and over 80 feet thick at the base, and it is punctuated with steep towers fitted with arrowslits. Battlements cap the wall, allowing sentries to watch the pass and defend the fortress from attack. Atop each tower is a pair of catapults. Ballistae and scorpions are positioned every 40 feet along the wall's length.

In the center of the pass is a massive gate. Its doors stand 100-feet tall, and it takes 40 aurochs to pull them open. The gatehouse surrounding the doors consists of two towers, each as tall as the wall and wider than three standing towers together.

Bordrin's Watch can accommodate 3,000 soldiers on the walls and in the towers, but the grounds on the eastern side of the pass can hold up to 100 times this number if need be. Granaries are replenished each season, fed by towns, hamlets, and communities all under Overlook's protection. The stores can keep a modest-sized force fed and watered for up to six months without needing to resupply.

Like the Monastery, the Watch contains a secret staircase that winds down into the mountain and connects at a large room called the Nexus. There, soldiers at the Watch could move beneath the feet of their enemy and strike them from behind. This passage hasn't been used in centuries and only a scant few know of its existence.

Elsir River: The headwaters of the Elsire River flow in a series of waterfalls that drain the mountains back into the valley to the east. West of Sodden (see below), the river is too rough and hides too many rocks for boats to navigate, though from Sodden, one can travel across the valley, going as far as Brindol.

Feud: Two dwarf families dominate this tiny hamlet and, as their name indicated, they are prone to violence. The only thing they can't stand more than one another is outsiders.

Hope: Another speck of a town, Hope appeared after prospectors found a vein of silver nearby. Once the vein played out, most of the miners moved north to Armistice, but a few stubborn folk live here still, working the mines in search of precious metals. Travelers have reported that something is not right with these people and there's a feeling that the citizens of Hope are hiding something sinister.

Lantern: A minuscule settlement of just fifty souls, Lantern is little more than a logging camp.

Monastery of the Sundered Chain: About eighteen miles southwest of Overlook stands the old Monastery of the Sundered Chain. Raised to house an order of holy warriors in service to Moradin, the templars have largely withdrawn from Overlook,

seeing the city as having lost its identity. Even though the relationship is strained, the monastery and the city remain allies. The monastery contains one of three access points to the tunnels beneath the Stonehome Mountains. The templars are reputed to be the only ones with the knowledge of how to close off the tunnels.

Myler's Stone: This town was once a large city, but years of decay, disease, and tragedy reduced the place to a handful of desperate people eking out an existence in the ruins of the past.

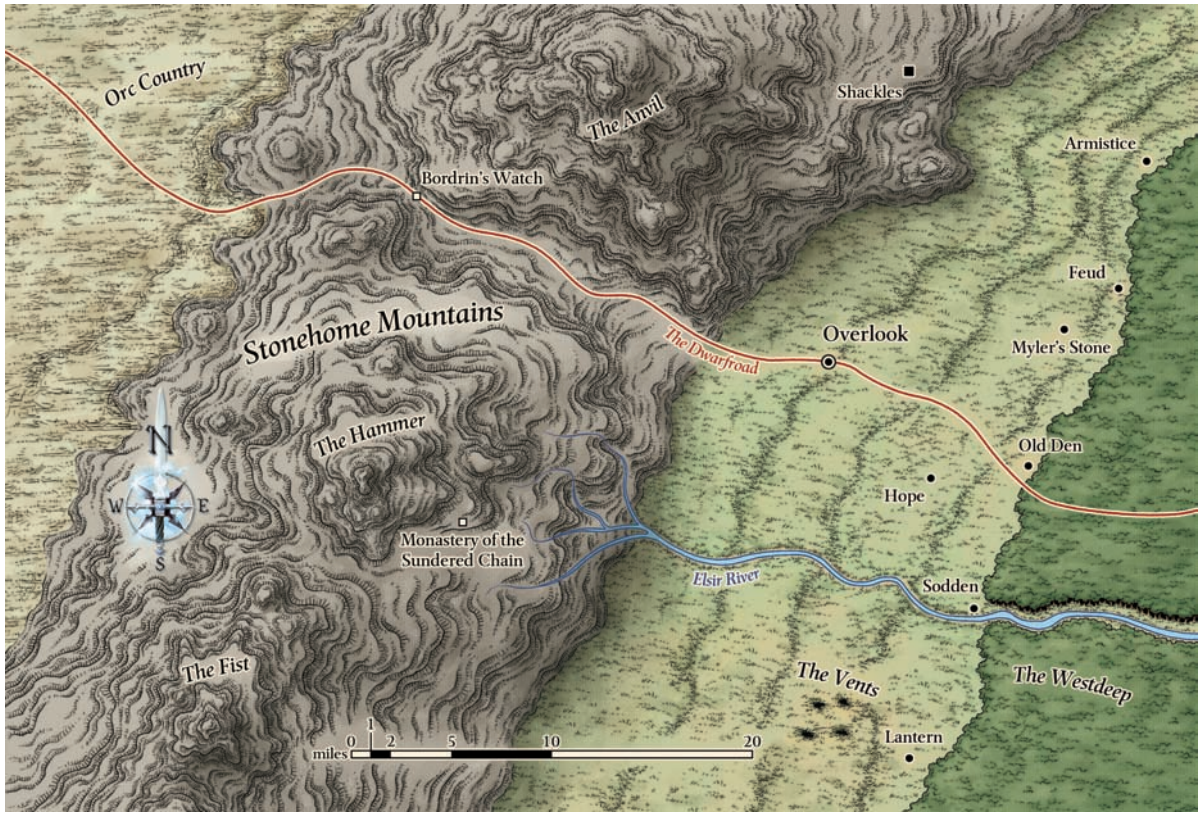
Old Den: A trade depot used by rangers and elves alike, this site is a cluster of wooden buildings surrounded by a palisade.

Shackles: Overlook's sister, Shackles was a powerful city and was the former capital of the fallen dwarven kingdom. It fell nearly two centuries ago when the orcs sacked it before the kingdom could respond.

Sodden: A small town at the headwaters of the Elsir River, this is a quaint community of farmers and fisherfolk. They work well with the elves, which is perhaps the only thing that stops the elves from erasing Lantern altogether.

The Vents: Natural fissures vent steam from a superheated underground lake. The tunnels are dangerous since they are also choked with foul monsters of the Underdark, dangerous flora, and vicious fauna. For more information on the Vents, see page 39.

The Westdeep: This dense forest grows in the narrow depression between the Stonehome and Wyrmsmoke Mountains. A dangerous place, several tribes of xenophobic elves live here, and they do not take kindly to trespassers. Conflict between the loggers at Lantern and the elves has come close to open war, and it's known that if the elves attack, the dwarves will be forced to respond.



Wilderness Encounters

The characters have plenty of opportunities to get in trouble while traveling to Overlook or when they explore the city's surrounding countryside. They can stumble into trouble while attempting to complete their mission, or if the characters aren't quite of the level they need to be to survive this adventure, you can add any of the following encounters.

Opportunists (Level 1; XP 500)

- 1 bugbear warrior (level 5 brute; *Monster Manual*, page 135)
- 2 goblin warriors (level 1 skirmisher; *Monster Manual*, page 137)
- 4 goblin cutters (level 1 minion; *Monster Manual*, page 136)

A brutish bugbear named Rorrag leads a small force out of the Westdeep to strike the smaller settlements for plunder and slaughter. Rorrag is aware of the approaching orc horde and seizes the chance to strike

these hamlets while their garrisons defend the Vale against the attack.

Deserters (Level 1; XP 518)

- 1 human berserker (level 4 brute; *Monster Manual*, page 163)
- 2 human bandits (level 2 skirmisher; *Monster Manual*, page 162)
- 3 human rabble (level 2 minion; *Monster Manual*, page 162)

Not all those called to defend Elsir Vale have the courage to do so, and as reports have filtered in from the west, a few warriors have abandoned their posts. Since deserters face death if captured, these men and women have turned to banditry to survive.

Orc Scouts (Level 1; XP 520)

- 2 orc scouts (level 3 skirmisher; page 53)
- 5 orc drudges (level 4 minion; *Monster Manual*, page 203)

A band of orcs, having slipped through the vents, now prowl the countryside, ambushing militias, adventurers, and anyone else they encounter to soften up the defenses against the horde's attack. All these orcs have the tell-tale tusks that mark their allegiance to their orog chieftain.

Westdeep Elves (Level 2; XP 625)

- 2 elf archers (level 2 artillery; *Monster Manual*, page 106)
- 3 elf scouts (level 2 skirmisher; *Monster Manual*, page 106)

Elf hunters patrol the fringes of the Westdeep, scouring the forest for loggers and trappers. They aren't interested in a fight with the PCs, unless the characters are despoiling the forest in some way. This said, characters treating the elves with respect might learn about orcs who have slipped through the mountains. Resolve this as a complexity 2 social challenge, using Bluff, Diplomacy, Insight, and Nature as the key skills. A success (six successes before three defeats) reveals the elves have encountered orcs in the forest, but not in considerable numbers. They suspect they might be part of the horde since their armor and weapons bristle with boar tusks.

The Freeriders

The characters aren't the only band of adventurers called to help defend Bordrin's Watch; and numerous groups, of varying skill and expertise, have come to Overlook to lend their talents in the fight against the approaching army. Most of these adventuring groups are pleasant enough, but rivalries, even good-natured ones, are bound to arise. During their stay in Overlook, the characters should eventually cross paths with the Freeriders. If you're using the slow start option, consider introducing these adventurers before the PCs are called to the Council of Elders.

The Freeriders formed up six months ago in Elsir's Crossing. They left the small community and headed east, where they dealt with a foul cabal of cultists in an isolated town called Beacon. After, they returned to Brindol for some down time and learned of the impending threat. Like the PCs, the Freeriders went west to do their part in defending their homeland.

Megan Swiftblade

Megan Swiftblade was the pretty daughter of a poor farmer not far from Brindol. When the Red Hand invaded the Vale, the goblins and dragonspawn slew her family and left her scarred—physically and emotionally. She spent the last decade honing her fighting skills, vowing she would give her life to protect innocents from the encroaching darkness so other young people would never face the horrors she was forced to endure.

Megan Swiftblade	**Level 3 Soldier**
Medium natural humanoid, human	XP 150
Initiative +4 **Senses** Perception +3	
HP 44; **Bloodied** 22	
AC 19; **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 16	
Speed 5	
Longsword (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+11 vs. AC; 1d8 + 5 damage, and the target is marked until the end of Megan's next turn.	
Longbow (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
Ranged 20/40; +4 vs. AC; 1d10 + 1 damage.	
Sure Strike (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+13 vs. AC; 1d8 + 1 damage.	
Tide of Iron (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
Requires shield; +11 vs. AC; 1d8 + 5 damage, and the target, if Large or smaller, is pushed 1 square. The target is marked until the end of Megan's next turn. Megan can shift into the space the pushed target vacated.	
Dance of Steel (standard; encounter) ✦ **Weapon**	
+11 vs. AC; 2d8 + 5 damage, and the target is marked and slowed until the end of Megan's next turn.	
No Opening (immediate interrupt, when an enemy attacks and has combat advantage; encounter)	
Megan cancels the combat advantage she was about to grant.	
Alignment Good **Languages** Common, Goblin	
Skills Intimidate +6	
Str 18 (+5) **Dex** 13 (+2) **Wis** 14 (+3)	
Con 12 (+2) **Int** 11 (+1) **Cha** 10 (+1)	
Equipment scale armor, light shield, longsword, longbow with quiver of 20 arrows, adventurer's kit	

As the leader of the Freeriders, Megan sees her fellow adventurers as extended family and is protective of them—protective to the point that conflicts sometimes arise. She can come off as brusque, but she means well and is fearless in battle. Megan is sword thin with an attractive figure, keeps her blond hair cut short, and has a vicious scar that runs from her forehead and down her left cheek.

Ragnum Dourstone

The heart of the Freeriders is Ragnum Dourstone, a graying dwarf priest of Moradin. Born and raised in Overlook, he left the city in disgust after witnessing the decay in his church. Although estranged from his kin, he would not abandon the city to the orc armies and so he convinced his companions to make the journey west.

Ragnum is just over 4-1/2 feet tall and weighs upward of 200 pounds. He has auburn hair streaked with gray and a thick beard he wears in braids. Gruff and serious, he believes in doing his duty with honor and is an implacable foe when crossed.

Sylen Leafrunner

Born in the Westdeep, Sylen left his woodland home, disagreeing with their distrust and remembering how his people aided in the defense of the Vale against the Red Hand. He fell in with Megan and began a torrid love affair that has endured over the years. Although he feels strongly for the woman, he is secretly ashamed, feeling as though he has betrayed his people and his culture by his dalliance in human realms.

Sylen is whip thin, with long brown hair and angular features that give him the look of a fox. He's most comfortable in his hunting garb and wears clothing dyed in greens and browns. He's friendly and a constant companion, keeping his secret guilt close to his heart.

Ragnum Dourstone **Level 3 Controller (Leader)**
Medium natural humanoid, dwarf XP 150

Initiative +1 **Senses** Perception +4; low-light vision
HP 46; **Bloodied** 23
AC 17; **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 13, **Will** 16
Saving Throws +5 against poison effects
Speed 5

Warhammer (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+8 vs. AC; 1d10 + 4 damage.

Crossbow (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 15/30; +5 vs. AC; 1d8 damage.

Priest's Shield (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+8 vs. AC; 1d10 + 4 damage, and Ragnum or one adjacent ally gains a +1 power bonus to AC until the end of Ragnum's next turn.

Wrathful Thunder (standard; encounter) ✦ **Thunder, Weapon**
+8 vs. AC; 1d10 + 4 thunder damage, and the target is dazed until the end of Ragnum's next turn.

Healing Word (minor; 2/encounter [1/round]) ✦ **Healing**
One ally; the target spends a healing surge and regains an additional 1d6 + 3 hit points.

Cure Light Wounds (standard; daily) ✦ **Healing**
Melee touch; the target regains a number of hit points equal to its surge value + 3.

Stand Your Ground
When an effect forces a dwarf to move—through a pull, a push, or a slide—the dwarf moves 1 square less than the effect specifies. When an attack would knock the dwarf prone, the dwarf can roll a saving throw to avoid falling prone.

Alignment Lawful good **Languages** Common, Dwarven
Skills Dungeoneering +6, Endurance +5, Religion +6
Str 16 (+4) **Dex** 10 (+1) **Wis** 16 (+4)
Con 14 (+3) **Int** 11 (+1) **Cha** 13 (+2)
Equipment chainmail, warhammer, crossbow with case of 10 bolts, symbol, adventurer's kit

Sylen Leafrunner **Level 3 Skirmisher**
Medium fey humanoid, elf XP 150

Initiative +7 **Senses** Perception +10; low-light vision
Group Awareness aura 5; all allies inside the aura gain a +1 racial bonus to Perception checks.
HP 44; **Bloodied** 22
AC 19; **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 15
Speed 7

Longsword (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+8 vs. AC; 1d8 + 2 damage.

Longbow (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 20/40; +9 vs. AC; 1d10 + 4 damage.

Elven Accuracy (free; encounter)
Sylen can reroll an attack roll. It must use the second roll, even if it's lower.

Hunter's Quarry (minor; at-will [1/round])
Closest enemy becomes Sylen's quarry. Once per round, Sylen can deal an extra 1d6 damage on an attack against his quarry. Sylen can have just one quarry at a time.

Twin Strike (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Requires longbow; ranged 20/40; +9 vs. AC, two attacks; 1d10 damage per attack.

Cut and Run (standard; encounter) ✦ **Weapon**
Requires longbow; ranged 20/40; +9 vs. AC, two attacks; 1d10 + 4 damage per attack. Sylen can shift up to 3 squares after the first or second attack.

Yield Ground (immediate reaction, when damaged by a melee attack; encounter)
Sylen can shift 2 squares and gains a +2 power bonus to all defenses until the end of his next turn.

Alignment Good **Languages** Common, Elven
Skills Nature +10, Stealth +10
Str 14 (+3) **Dex** 18 (+5) **Wis** 15 (+3)
Con 12 (+2) **Int** 11 (+1) **Cha** 10 (+1)
Equipment leather armor, longsword, longbow with a quiver of 20 arrows, adventurer's kit

Ghena Tenson

An arcanist of some talent, Ghena was apprenticed to a wizard who helped save the Elsir Vale from the Red Hand a decade past. When she had learned all she could, she left to find her own place in the world. Ghena is content to work with the Freeriders, but sees it as a short-term venture, since she believes she's destined for greatness, far more than her current companions will ever achieve.

Short, pudgy, with a round face and small eyes, she has shoulder-length blond hair, a face full of

Ghena Tenson	Level 3 Controller
Medium natural humanoid, human	XP 150
Initiative +2 **Senses** Perception +3	
HP 44; **Bloodied** 22	
AC 19; **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 16	
Speed 6	
(+) **Quarterstaff** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+5 vs. AC; 1d8 damage.	
Magic Missile (standard; at-will) ✦ **Force**	
Ranged 20; +7 vs. Reflex; 2d4 + 4 force damage. This power counts as a ranged basic attack.	
Cloud of Daggers (standard; at-will) ✦ **Force**	
Area burst 1 within 10; +7 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 4 force damage. The power's area is filled with sharp daggers of force. Any creature that enters the area or starts its turn there takes 2 force damage. The cloud remains in place until the end of Ghena's next turn.	
Color Spray (standard; encounter) ✦ **Radiant**	
Close blast 5; +7 vs. Will; 1d6 + 4 radiant damage, and the target is dazed until the end of Ghena's next turn.	
Shield (immediate interrupt, when hit by an attack; encounter)	
Ghena gains a +4 power bonus to AC and Reflex defense until the end of her next turn.	
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Draconic	
Skills Arcana +10, History +10, Religion +10	
Str 10 (+1) **Dex** 13 (+2) **Wis** 14 (+3)	
Con 12 (+2) **Int** 18 (+5) **Cha** 10 (+1)	
Equipment robes, staff, spellbook, adventurer's kit	

freckles, and long, slender fingers. She wears traveling clothes and carries a black staff with silver ferrules at either end.

Madrick

Madrick never planned on becoming an adventurer; he was content in his forest home in the Feywild with his pet raccoon, Bandit. However, the formorians raided his community, and only by his quick wit and a timely warning from Bandit did Madrick escape. Unfortunately for him, he went through a doorway into the natural world. Confused, surprised, and a little homesick, Madrick took up with the Freeriders for lack of anything else to do and has remained with them ever since. Although he enjoys their company, he's always looking for a way back to his home so he might rescue his captured kin.

Madrick is short, with pale skin, and large black eyes. He wears brown and gray clothing to help him sneak about. His best friend in the world is Bandit and the raccoon is never far from his side.

Madrick	Level 3 Skirmisher
Small fey humanoid	XP 150
Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +6; low-light vision	
HP 44; **Bloodied** 22	
AC 18; **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 16	
Speed 5	
(+) **Dagger** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+8 vs. AC; 1d4 + 1 damage.	
Dagger (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
Ranged 5/10; +10 vs. AC; 1d4 + 3 damage.	
or Sly Flourish (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
Requires dagger; melee 1 or ranged 5/10; +10 vs. AC; 1d4 + 6 damage.	
Positioning Strike (standard; encounter) ✦ **Weapon**	
Requires dagger; +10 vs. Will; 1d4 + 3 damage, and slide the target 3 squares.	
Sneak Attack	
Once per round, Madrick's attack deals an extra 2d6 damage to a target he has combat advantage against.	
Fade Away (immediate reaction, when Madrick takes damage; encounter) ✦ **Illusion**	
Madrick is invisible until he attacks or until the end of his next turn.	
Reactive Stealth	
If Madrick has cover or concealment when he makes an initiative check, he can make a Stealth check to escape notice.	
Fleeting Ghost (move; at-will)	
Madrick can move his speed and make a Stealth check. He does not take the normal penalty from movement on this check.	
Alignment Good **Languages** Common, Elven	
Skills Arcana +4, Stealth +11, Thievery +9	
Str 13 (+2) **Dex** 16 (+4) **Wis** 11 (+1)	
Con 12 (+2) **Int** 12 (+2) **Cha** 16 (+4)	
Equipment leather armor, 5 daggers, adventurer's kit, raccoon named Bandit	

Other Adventuring Groups

Numerous other adventuring bands have come to Overlook, including the Farstriders, the Green Hand, the Company of Wolves, the Slayers, and others. You can flesh these out as needed, or just drop their names, and others of your own creation, into the background to emphasize the severity of the threat to the city.

Of these other groups, only the Farstriders bear special mention. Led by Edgar Sommerfield, a warlord of some fame, the Farstriders are far and above the most successful adventuring party in these lands, hence their being tasked with the Vents. They've slain a black dragon, ousted a nest of kobolds, and even undertaken an expedition into the Shadowfell. Aside from Sommerfield, the group includes twin elf rangers, Uulath and Reiner, a half-elf warlock named Jen, and Corben, a human fighter. Their statistics aren't necessary since they are all slain in their attempt to seal the Nexus, leaving it to the PCs to save Overlook and the Elsir Vale from the attackers.

DM's Tip: If the characters spend any time in Overlook before they head out for the monastery, you could introduce this party along with the Freeriders. This experienced group might serve as mentors, for a time, or close friends, making their deaths all the more poignant when the characters find their corpses.

Monastery of the Sundered Chain

Constructed centuries ago to house an elite fighting force of Moradin dedicates, the Monastery of the Sundered Chain preserves the memories of the hardships endured at the hands of the giants, and it trains initiates in fighting arts useful for battling these foes. For generations, the monastery has stood as a symbol of dwarven perseverance and expertise in the fighting arts and one who trains there not only receives an excellent education in religion and combat, but also gains a mark of pride and honor.

The monastery is about 20 miles from Overlook, higher up in the mountains, and just beneath the Hammer, a great peak that loosely resembles a downturned hammer. The trip to the monastery can be free of danger, or, if the PCs are in need of additional experience points, can be reached safely with an extended skill challenge.

Setup: The PCs must navigate the mountains using their expertise and cunning to avoid monsters and hazards lurking at the higher elevations between Overlook and the monastery.

Level: 3.

Complexity: 1 (requires 4 successes before 3 failures).

Primary Skills: Endurance, Nature, Perception, Stealth.

Special: Once the characters reach the monastery, they gain a +2 bonus to all checks each time they repeat this challenge.

Endurance (DC 15): A trek through the trackless wilderness is slow and arduous. At least two characters must make Endurance checks to preserve their stamina and avoid fatigue, injury, and exhaustion. Failed checks result in everyone in the party losing 1 healing surge in addition to counting as a failure.

*Nature (DC 20)***:** The mountain paths are twisting and confusing, making it easy to become lost. In addition to counting as a failure, two failed Nature checks result in the characters losing 1 healing surge since they have to backtrack and reorient themselves to regain their bearings.

Perception (DC 20): The character notices an easier route up to the monastery, granting a +2 bonus to all Endurance, Nature, and Stealth checks for the remainder of the journey.

Stealth (DC 15): The characters move cautiously through the mountains, being careful not to attract attention. A failure closes off this approach for the duration of the challenge.

Success: The characters reach the monastery or Overlook without trouble.

Failure: Roll on the following table and begin a combat encounter with the indicated monsters. After finishing the encounter, the PCs must start their challenge over again to reach their intended destination.

WILDERNESS ENCOUNTERS

d%	Monsters Encountered
01-10	3 griffons
11-20	2 cave bears
21-30	5 hippogriffs
31-60	6 orc raiders
61-70	Orc eye of Gruumsh and 4 orc berserkers
71-80	5 wights
81-90	5 ghouls
91-100	4 gnoll marauders

When arranging the battlefield, use a mountain map with difficult terrain (rubble, scree), cover (rocky outcroppings and defiles), and concealment (deep shadows) to create a dynamic fight. Orcs fight until slain; all other monsters flee when reduced to 10 hit points or fewer. None of these encounters has treasure.

Dungeon Features

Certain elements of the dungeon are universal throughout the complex.

Doors: Unless otherwise mentioned, none of the doors are locked and all can be opened by depressing a lever in the handle. Doors open inward, and so the hinges are in the room's interior.

Stairs: Stairs count as difficult terrain. Unless otherwise called out in the text, stairs are made from stone.

Extended Rest

Few places are safe enough inside the dungeon for an extended rest since the orcs constantly move about, carrying plunder up to the temple proper. To take an extended rest, the characters have to leave the monastery and find a safe place to hide in the surrounding countryside. Any attacks are noticed while the characters are gone, and the orcs reinforce cleared rooms with fresh troops drawn from other locations.

Monastery of the Sundered Chain Overview

The monastery includes the following areas.

Monastery

This area includes the monastery, the courtyard, and the outer walls. The entire site butts up against the mountains, which serve as the fourth wall. The outer walls stand 50 feet tall and plinths spaced at regular intervals reinforce it. Access to the courtyard comes by way of a pair of 30-foot tall double doors, which are never locked.

Inside the walls is the Hall of Moradin and the surrounding courtyard. Fine sand covers the courtyard and the spaces between endless rows of statues, each carved to commemorate the deeds of an ancient dwarf hero.

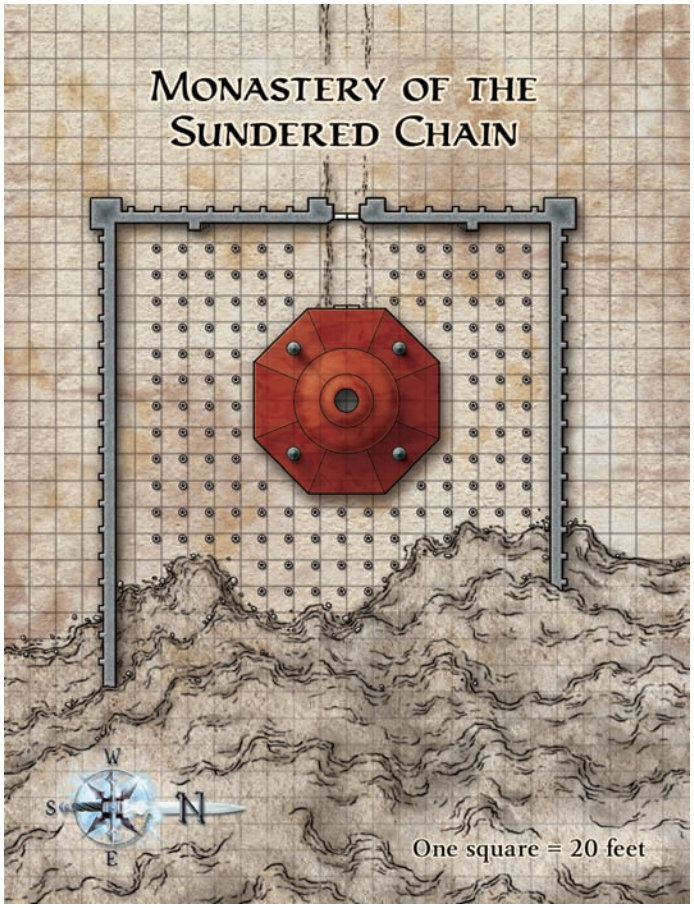
The monastery is a looming structure capped with a red-tiled roof. Bas-reliefs adorn its exterior, capturing religious events and heroes in perfect stone carvings.

Orcs have overrun the place, with a band outside in the courtyard and a second group in the Hall. The latter is defacing Moradin's altar.

Hall of Heroes

Accessed by way of a concealed staircase inside the Hall of Moradin, the Hall of Heroes stretches out hundreds of feet below the monastery above it. Here, the monks slept and reflected on their devotion to their god. The Hall's north end opens onto a switchback stair that drops even deeper into the mountain to the workshops far below.

The once sacred areas house only carnage, for the orcs overran the dwarves and slew them all, leaving their bodies to rot where they lay.



Chamber of Works

At the bottom of the great staircase is the Chamber of Works, where the monks honored their gods by producing fine dwarfcraft weapons, armor, and other goods, which they sold to feed and clothe themselves. The orcs now use this room to tease out the secrets from their prisoners, subjecting them to awful torment before feeding their bones to the fires.

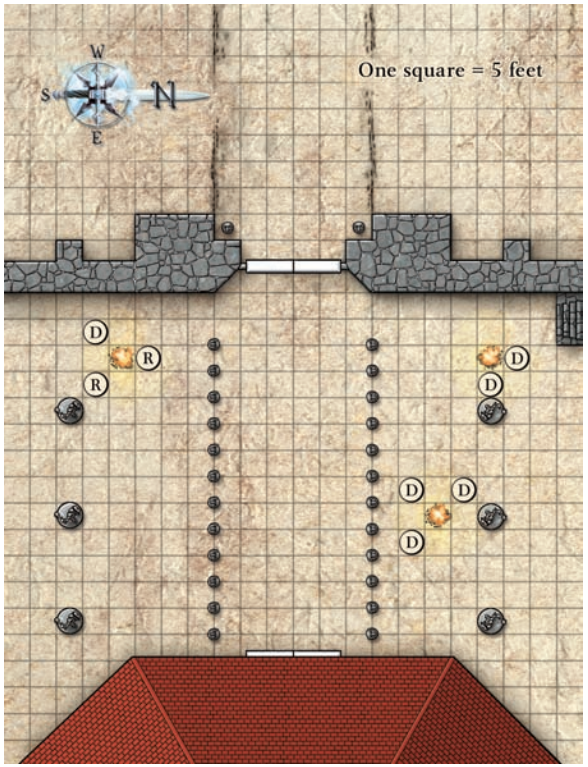
Orc Sentries

Encounter Level 1 (564 XP)

Setup

A small force of orcs camps in the courtyard outside the monastery, and they keep their eyes out for intruders. Each group has settled around campfires where indicated on the tactical map. The characters can access the courtyard by moving through the closed double doors or by climbing the wall.

2 orc raiders (R)
6 orc drudges (D)



When the characters approach, read:

A grand edifice rises above steep walls, which are about 50-feet tall. These walls encircle the compound and run up to the higher slopes of the mountain beyond.

When the characters move inside the wall, read:

Near the gate, you see three bonfires burning, where gray and green-skinned savages cook haunches of meat that look suspiciously like arms and legs.

Perception Check
DC 10: *The characters spot smoke rising from the courtyard.*

Tactics

Although charged with guard duty, the orcs are lax and more interested in feeding their hunger. At the first sign of trouble, they toss aside their meals and leap to their feet to engage the enemies.

2 Orc Raiders (R)	**Level 3 Skirmisher**
Medium natural humanoid	XP 150 each
Initiative +5	**Senses** Perception +1; low-light vision
HP 46; **Bloodied** 23; see also *warrior's surge*	
AC 17; **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 12	
Speed 6 (8 while charging)	
(standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**: **Greataxe** +8 vs. AC; 1d12 + 3 damage (crit 1d12 + 15).	
(standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**: **Handaxe** Ranged 5/10; +7 vs. AC; 1d6 + 3 damage; see also *killer's eye*.	
(standard, usable only while bloodied; encounter) ✦ **Healing, Weapon**: **Warrior's Surge** The orc raider makes a melee basic attack and regains 11 hit points.	
Killer's Eye: When making a ranged attack, the orc raider ignores cover and concealment (but not total concealment) if the target is within 5 squares of it.	
Alignment Chaotic evil	**Languages** Common, Giant
Skills Endurance +8, Intimidate +5	
Str 17 (+4)	**Dex** 15 (+3) **Wis** 10 (+1)
Con 14 (+3)	**Int** 8 (+0) **Cha** 9 (+0)
Equipment leather armor, greataxe, 4 handaxes	

Features of the Area

Illumination: At night, the cook fires shed bright light in a 20-square radius.

Ground: Fine sand covers the ground throughout the courtyard, and while somewhat slippery, it does not interfere with movement.

Stairs: Stairs lead to the battlements 10 squares above the battlefield. Refer to the temple map on page 28 for a larger look at the area.

Statues: Two rows of stone statues line the approach to the doors. Characters standing in a space adjacent to a statue gain cover. Climbing a statue requires a DC 10 Athletics check. Each statue has AC 22, other defenses 20; hp 50; resist 10 to all damage.

Massive Statues: Hulking statues of dwarf champions spread out from this approach. Statues provide total cover to those standing behind them. Climbing a massive statue requires a DC 15 Athletics check. Finally, each massive statue has AC 22, other defenses 20; hp 500; resist 10 to all damage.

Campfires: Any creature entering or starting its turn in one of these spaces takes 1d6 fire damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).

6 Orc Drudges (D)	**Level 4 Minion**
Medium natural humanoid	XP 44 each
Initiative +0	**Senses** Perception +0; low-light vision
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	
AC 16; **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 12, **Will** 12	
Speed 6 (8 while charging)	
(standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**: **Club** +9 vs. AC; 5 damage.	
Alignment Chaotic evil	**Languages** Common, Giant
Str 16 (+5)	**Dex** 10 (+2) **Wis** 10 (+2)
Con 14 (+4)	**Int** 8 (+1) **Cha** 9 (+1)
Equipment hide armor, club	

Hall of Moradin

Encounter Level 2 (651 XP)

Setup

The orcs took the dwarf priests by surprise, coming up from below through the hidden door in the altar. The battle was vicious and the dwarves were eventually slain, leaving this once breathtaking chamber in the hands of cruel orcs to despoil and destroy. An orc witch doctor (W) completes its prayers to Gruumsh by defacing the altar, while a pair of orc bolt throwers stands guard in the balcony.

At the start of the second round, an orc sergeant (S) leads a squad of 4 orc drudges (D) out from the depths of the temple. At the start of the second round, place their miniatures in available spaces next to the altar.

1 orc sergeant (S)
1 orc witch doctor (W)
2 orc bolt throwers (B)
4 orc drudges (D)

When the characters enter this chamber, read:

The dome of this massive chamber features a brilliant mural of dwarves fighting giants in what looks like the same mountains through which you have traveled. At the center of the room is a dais ringed with blood-spattered steps. Atop it stands a cracked anvil, clearly an altar, but now desecrated by dripping gore and smears of filth. A hideous orc crone dressed in tattered rags screeches when she sees you, hopping from one leg to the other in outrage.

Perception Check
DC 17: *You spot movement coming from the balcony overhead—a figure wielding an impossibly large crossbow in two hands drools with excitement as it levels the weapon at you.*

Tactics

The orc witch doctor is none too thrilled to see the PCs and screams in the hopes of hurrying along the reinforcements from below. She and her bolt throwers buy time until the orc sergeant and the drudges arrive.

The witch doctor spits curses, delaying her action until one or more PCs come within her range. The first PC to close the distance receives her *unspeakable filth* for his or her bravery and when the rest converge, the witch doctor follows up on the second round with *curse of Gruumsh*. Should any enemies reach her, she switches tactics and lays into her foes with her *disgusting claws*.

The orc bolt throwers stay on the balcony, taking advantage of the cover. They pick off soft targets first, but switch their targets to any who try to engage in melee. After a couple of shots, the bolt throwers' bloodlust gets the better of them and they rush down to engage their enemies.

When the sergeant arrives on the second round, he takes over, directing his drudges to move and charge the closest PCs and keep them off the witch doctor. He fights from behind the drudges, using his reach weapon to press the attack, while benefiting from protection provided by his expendable troops. The drudges fight as directed, charging the PCs and fighting until slain.

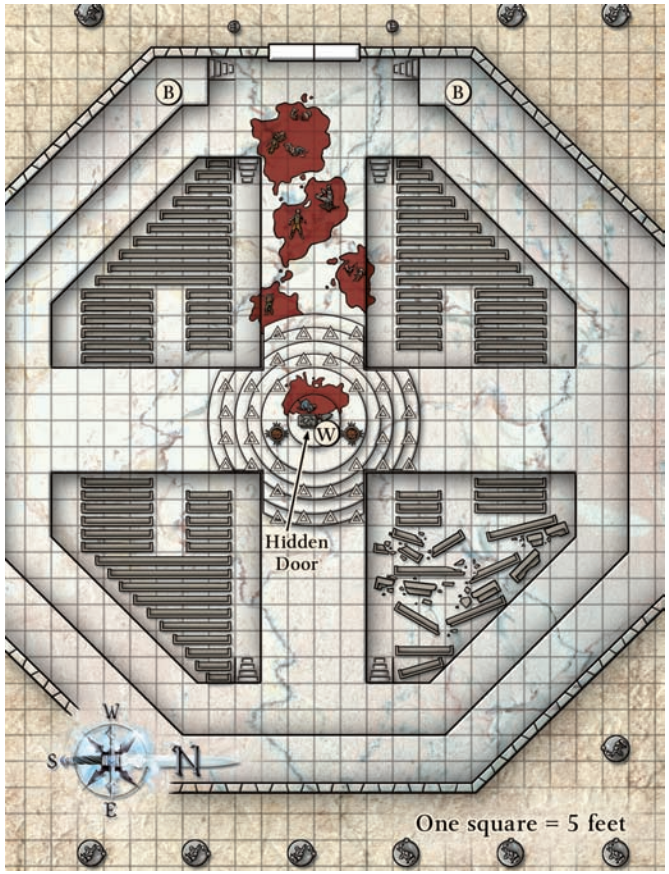
The orcs know the way out is sealed behind them thanks to Kalad (see M5), so they fight to death, giving and expecting no quarter.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Two braziers atop the dais fill the room with bright light.

Ceiling: The ceiling stretches 140 feet overhead.

Balcony: Two staircases (difficult terrain) lead up to a balcony that overlooks the hall. Characters on the balcony gain cover from attacks made from below.



Sunken Areas: Stairs lead down to sunken seating areas filled with pews. The pews are packed densely enough to count as difficult terrain in any space containing a pew.

Dwarf Corpses: The remains of the brave dwarf priests and paladins litter the floor, their blood cooling on the stone floor.

Dais: The steps leading up to the dais count as difficult terrain.

Altar: On the center of the dais is a large altar dedicated to Moradin, cut from black basalt and carved to resemble a large anvil. The orc witch doctor has desecrated the holy stone, smearing excrement on its surface and mingling the filth with the spilled entrails of murdered priests. Orcs in spaces adjacent to the defaced altar gain a +1 power bonus to their attack rolls.

Hidden Door: The altar slides on a cunningly crafted base to reveal a staircase going down. Normally, a DC 25 Perception check is required to find the hidden door, but the orcs coming through it reveals its presence to any who can see them when they first emerge.

Steps and Dais: Statuary, rubble, bones, trees, crates, boxes, and so on are on the steps and dais.

Braziers: A character can tip over a brazier by making a DC 10 Strength check, or dealing 20 damage to it. When knocked over, the brazier makes a close blast 3 attack against each creature in the area; +6 vs. Reflex; 1d10 fire damage (crit 2d10 fire damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage [save ends]).

Orc Sergeant (S) **Level 3 Soldier (Leader)**
Medium natural humanoid XP 150

Initiative +2 **Senses** Perception +5; low-light vision
Lead by Fear aura 1; orcs inside the aura gain a +1 power bonus to attack rolls.
HP 46; **Bloodied** 23; see also *warrior's surge*
AC 19; **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 13, **Will** 14
Speed 6 (8 while charging)

(+) **Glaive** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Reach 2; +10 vs. AC; 2d4 + 4 damage.

+ **Warrior's Surge** (standard, usable only while bloodied; encounter) ✦ **Healing**
The orc sergeant makes a melee basic attack and regains 11 hit points.

Back to the Front! (immediate reaction, when orc ally within 5 squares is forcibly moved; at-will)
Slide triggering ally 1 square.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common, Giant
Skills Endurance +5, Intimidate +5
Str 19 (+5) **Dex** 9 (+0) **Wis** 13 (+2)
Con 14 (+3) **Int** 11 (+1) **Cha** 11 (+1)
Equipment chainmail, glaive, tattered cloak

2 Orc Bolt Throwers (B) **Level 1 Artillery**
Medium natural humanoid XP 100

Initiative +2 **Senses** Perception +4; low-light vision
HP 26; **Bloodied** 13; see also *warrior's surge*
AC 13; **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 11
Speed 6 (8 while charging)

(+) **Battleaxe** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+6 vs. AC; 1d10 + 3 damage

(+) **Bellybow** (standard; at-will; recharges when the creature uses a move action to reload it) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 20/40; +8 vs. AC; 1d12 + 2 damage, and the target is pushed 1 square.

+ **Warrior's Surge** (standard, usable only while bloodied; encounter) ✦ **Healing**
The orc bolt thrower makes a melee basic attack and regains 6 hit points.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common, Giant
Skills Stealth +7
Str 14 (+2) **Dex** 15 (+2) **Wis** 9 (-1)
Con 14 (+2) **Int** 9 (-1) **Cha** 8 (-1)
Equipment leather armor, battleaxe, bellybow with 10 bolts

Orc Witch Doctor (W) **Level 2 Controller**
Medium natural humanoid XP 125

Initiative +2 **Senses** Perception +3; low-light vision
HP 33; **Bloodied** 16
AC 15; **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 17
Speed 6 (8 while charging)

(+) **Disgusting Claws** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Poison**
+7 vs. AC; 1d6 + 1 damage, and ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).

Curse of Gruumsh (standard; recharge ⚄⚅) ✦ **Acid**
Ranged 10; +6 vs. Fortitude; target is blinded (save ends), and the orc witch doctor makes a secondary attack.
Secondary Attack: Close burst 1 centered on primary target; +6 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 4 acid damage, and ongoing 2 acid damage (save ends).

Unspeakable Filth (standard; at-will)
Ranged 5/10; +5 vs. Reflex; 1d4 + 4 damage, and the target takes -2 penalty to attack rolls until the end of the orc witch doctor's next turn.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common, Giant
Skills Arcana +6, Intimidate +10
Str 11 (+1) **Dex** 12 (+2) **Wis** 14 (+3)
Con 9 (+0) **Int** 11 (+1) **Cha** 18 (+5)
Equipment befouled rags, bone rod

6 Orc Drudges (D) **Level 4 Minion**
Medium natural humanoid XP 44 each

Initiative +0 **Senses** Perception +0; low-light vision
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.
AC 16; **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 12, **Will** 12
Speed 6 (8 while charging)

(+) **Club** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+9 vs. AC; 5 damage.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common, Giant
Str 16 (+5) **Dex** 10 (+2) **Wis** 10 (+2)
Con 14 (+4) **Int** 8 (+1) **Cha** 9 (+1)
Equipment hide armor, club

Hall of Heroes

Encounter Level 4 (889 XP)

Setup

The orcs boiled up from the depths and spilled into this grand hall, killing everything they encountered. In the aftermath of the violence, the orcs are scouring the remains in search of treasure, hidden enemies, and a way to unseal the passage through the mountain.

1 orc berserker (B)
3 orog militants (M)
6 orc drudges (D)

When the characters descend the stairs and reach this room, read:

The carnage in this grand hall is obscene. Dead dwarves, some still in their nightclothes, litter the floor, blood painting the gray stone tiles, walls, and columns. In the light cast by burning braziers, you see the butchers: more orcs.

Important!: Have the characters make Stealth checks as they descend the stairs. If their results are 12 or higher, they take the monsters by surprise.

Tactics

The orcs howl in rage when they spot new enemies and surge forward to slaughter the PCs.

The orc berserker charges the closest character on its first action, moving first if needed to set up the charge. The berserker viciously attacks with its greataxe each round until it's bloodied, at which point it uses *warrior's surge* before resuming its attack. The berserker fights to the death.

The orog militants are far more cautious in their approach. They stay close to their allies to employ their *fierce counterstrike* power and *discipline*, preferring to stay close to other orogs or the berserker to the drudges. If the militants are bloodied, they shift back and spend their second wind, jumping back into the thick of battle at the start of their next turn.

The orc drudges are reckless and overconfident. They fling themselves at their foes with little regard for strategy.

All monsters here fight to the death.

Features of the Area

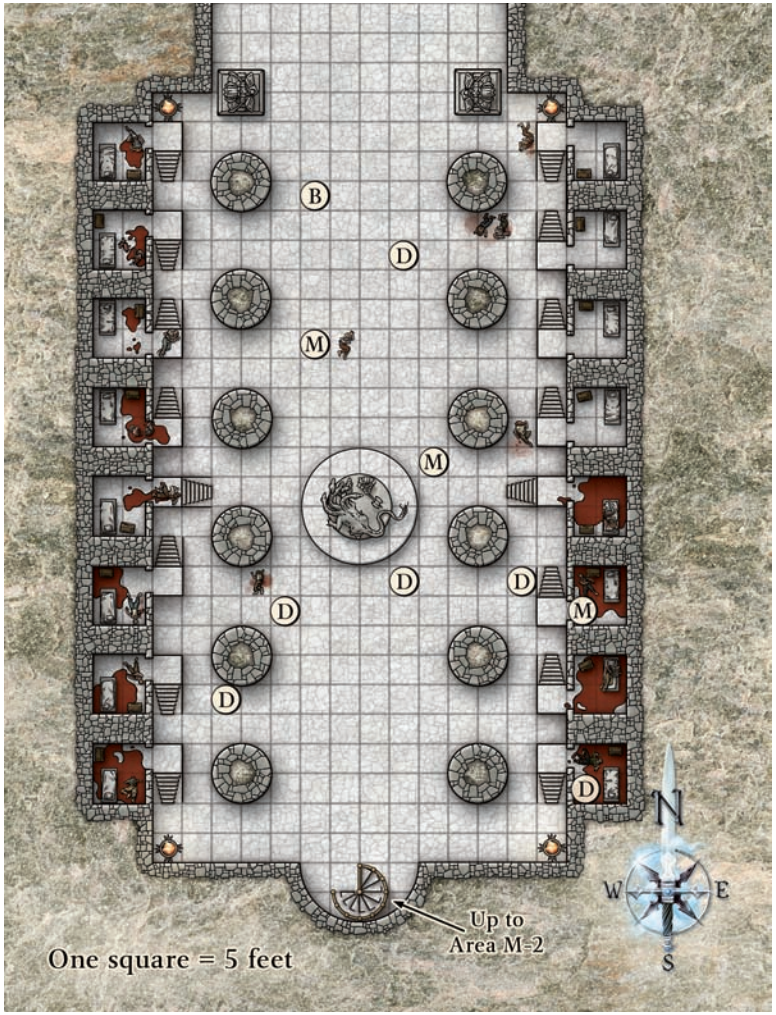
Illumination: Braziers in each of the four corners shed light in a 10-square radius, illuminating all but the center of this massive room. Tipping a brazier requires a DC 10 Strength check or attacks that deal a total of 20 damage. When knocked over, the brazier makes a close blast 3 attack against each creature in the area; +6 vs. Reflex; 1d10 fire damage (crit 2d10 fire damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage [save ends]).

Ceiling: The ceiling is 20 squares overhead.

Stairs: A spiral staircase at the southern end of the room leads up to room 1-2. The stairs count as difficult terrain.

Adjoining Rooms: All along either side of the room are stairs that climb 30 feet up to a landing and the entrance to one of the priests' cells. The steps count as difficult terrain.

The cells are bare and devoid of much of interest. Each contains a cot, a trunk filled with personal effects such as spare robes, smallclothes, and a few relics from the dwarves' lives before they joined the monastery. The items have no worth beyond their sentimental value.



Columns: Two rows of 10-foot diameter columns support the ceiling overhead. Climbing a column requires a DC 25 Athletics check. Each column has AC 20, other defenses 18; hp 100; resist 10 to all damage. Destroying a column triggers a cave-in (*Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 91). The columns provide total cover to creatures standing behind them.

Statue: A massive statue of a dwarf warrior battling a hydra dominates the center of the room, standing nearly as tall as the ceiling. A DC 20 History check reveals the statue describes a famous battle between Dergan Fellfist and a legendary hydra that devoured 300 warriors until the dwarf hero killed the beast in single combat. It's said Dergan's bones were interred somewhere in the mountains and, given the statue's presence, it's a safe bet that his remains are sealed beneath the statues. Climbing the statue requires a DC 20 Athletics check. The statue has AC 25, other defenses 18; hp 300; resist 15 to all damage.

Dwarf Statues: At the north end of the room, flanking the exit, is a pair of 30-foot tall statues of grim dwarf warriors, each holding an axe, with the head down, between its feet. The statues wear helmets that conceal all but their beard. The statues do not depict particular dwarf warriors, but rather are idealized versions of Moradin's chosen servants. A DC 15 Perception check reveals that the base of the statues are smooth and dark, caused by the countless hands that have touched them for the blessing they are thought to bestow.

Climbing the statue requires a DC 20 Athletics check. The statue has AC 20, other defenses 18; hp 100; resist 10 to all damage.

Corpses: The orcs took the dwarves by surprise. The dwarves fought bravely, but lacking their armor, they could not stand against the weapons and numbers of the invaders.

Orc Berserker (B) **Level 4 Brute**
Medium natural humanoid XP 175

Initiative +3 **Senses** Perception +2; low-light vision
HP 66; **Bloodied** 33; see also *warrior's surge*
AC 15; **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 13, **Will** 12
Speed 6 (8 while charging)

(+) **Greataxe** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+8 vs. AC; 1d12 + 5 damage (crit 1d12 + 17).

+ **Warrior's Surge** (standard, usable only while bloodied; encounter) ✦ **Healing, Weapon**
The orc berserker makes a melee basic attack and regains 16 hit points.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common, Giant
Skills Endurance +10, Intimidate +6

Str 20 (+7)	**Dex** 13 (+3)	**Wis** 10 (+2)
Con 16 (+5)	**Int** 8 (+1)	**Cha** 9 (+1)

Equipment leather armor, greataxe

6 Orc Drudges (D) **Level 4 Minion**
Medium natural humanoid XP 44 each

Initiative +0 **Senses** Perception +0; low-light vision
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.
AC 16; **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 12, **Will** 12
Speed 6 (8 while charging)

(+) **Club** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+9 vs. AC; 5 damage.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common, Giant

Str 16 (+5)	**Dex** 10 (+2)	**Wis** 10 (+2)
Con 14 (+4)	**Int** 8 (+1)	**Cha** 9 (+1)

Equipment hide armor, club

3 Orog Militants (M) **Level 3 Soldier**
Medium natural humanoid XP 150 each

Initiative +3 **Senses** Perception +2; low-light vision
HP 48; **Bloodied** 24
AC 20; **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 13, **Will** 14; see also *discipline*
Speed 5

(+) **Bastard Sword** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+10 vs. AC; 1d10 + 4 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the orog militant's next turn.

+ **Relentless** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Requires bastard sword; +10 vs. AC; 1d10 + 4 damage, and the target is pushed 1 square. The target is marked until the orog's next turn. The orog militant can shift into the vacated square as a free action.

+ **Fierce Counterstrike** (immediate reaction, when adjacent ally is first bloodied; encounter) ✦ **Weapon**
Requires bastard sword; +10 vs. AC; 2d10 + 4 damage, and the target is pushed 1 square. The orog militant can shift into the vacated square as a free action.

Discipline
Orogs gain a +2 bonus to saving throws against any ongoing effects when adjacent to an ally.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Giant

Str 19 (+5)	**Dex** 10 (+1)	**Wis** 13 (+2)
Con 16 (+4)	**Int** 9 (+0)	**Cha** 11 (+1)

Equipment plate armor, heavy shield, bastard sword

Into the Depths

Encounter Level 3 (751 XP)

Setup

The dwarves constructed this series of staircases and landings to reach the bottom of the chasm, where it connects to the deeper tunnels under the mountain.

1 orog champion (C)
1 spiretop drake (S)
3 orc bolt throwers (B)
4 orc drudges (D)

When the characters enter this room, read:

The floor gives way to a massive cavern. A long staircase and series of landings lead down to the cavern floor nearly 100 feet below. A group of orcs climbs the stairs.

Tactics

The orc bolt throwers concentrate their attacks against the ranged attackers, while the spiretop drake swoops in to harass characters that try the staircase going down. The orog scarred champion and the drudges race up the stairs to confront the PCs.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Braziers provide bright light in a 10-square radius.

Stairs: The stairs connecting the various landings count as difficult terrain.

Chasm: A fall from the ledges is likely lethal, dealing damage as appropriate for the height of the fall.

Orog Scarred Champion (C) **Level 4 Brute**
Medium natural humanoid, orc XP 175

Initiative +2 **Senses** Perception +8; low-light vision
HP 66; **Bloodied** 33; see also *champion's scorn*
AC 17; **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 15
Speed 5

⨁ **Greatsword** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+10 vs. AC; 1d10 + 5 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the orog scarred champion's next turn.

✧ **Winnowing Slash** (standard; recharge when first bloodied) ✦ **Weapon**
Requires greatsword; close burst 1; +7 vs. AC; 2d10 + 5 damage, and the target is pushed 1 square.

✧ **Champion's Scorn** (minor; at-will) ✦ **Fear**
Close blast 5; one creature; the target becomes the object of the orog's scorn. The orog scarred champion's melee attacks deal an extra 1d10 damage to the target, and if the scarred champion reduces the target to 0 hit points, it regains 16 hit points.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common, Giant
Skills Intimidate +6
Str 20 (+7) **Dex** 10 (+2) **Wis** 12 (+3)
Con 16 (+5) **Int** 9 (+1) **Cha** 8 (+1)
Equipment plate armor, greataxe

Spiretop Drake (S) **Level 1 Skirmisher**
Small natural beast (reptile) XP 100

Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +3
HP 29; **Bloodied** 14
AC 16; **Fortitude** 11, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 13
Speed 4, fly 8 (hover); see also *flyby attack*

⨁ **Bite** (standard; at-will)
+6 vs. AC; 1d6 + 4 damage.

⨁ **Snatch** (standard; at-will)
+4 vs. Reflex; 1 damage, and the spiretop drake steals a small object from the target, such as a vial, scroll, or coin.

Flyby Attack (standard; at-will)
The spiretop drake flies up to 8 squares and makes one melee basic attack at any point during that movement. The drake doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when moving away from the target of the attack.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Str 11 (+0) **Dex** 18 (+4) **Wis** 16 (+3)
Con 13 (+1) **Int** 3 (-4) **Cha** 11 (+0)

3 Orc Bolt Throwers (B) **Level 1 Artillery**
Medium natural humanoid XP 100 each

Initiative +2 **Senses** Perception +4; low-light vision
HP 26; **Bloodied** 13; see also *warrior's surge*
AC 13; **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 11
Speed 6 (8 while charging)

⨁ **Battleaxe** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+6 vs. AC; 1d10 + 3 damage

⨁ **Bellybow** (standard; at-will; recharges when the creature uses a move action to reload it) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 20/40; +8 vs. AC; 1d12 + 2 damage, and the target is pushed 1 square.

Warrior's Surge (standard, usable only while bloodied; encounter) ✦ **Healing**
The orc bolt thrower makes a melee basic attack and regains 6 hit points.

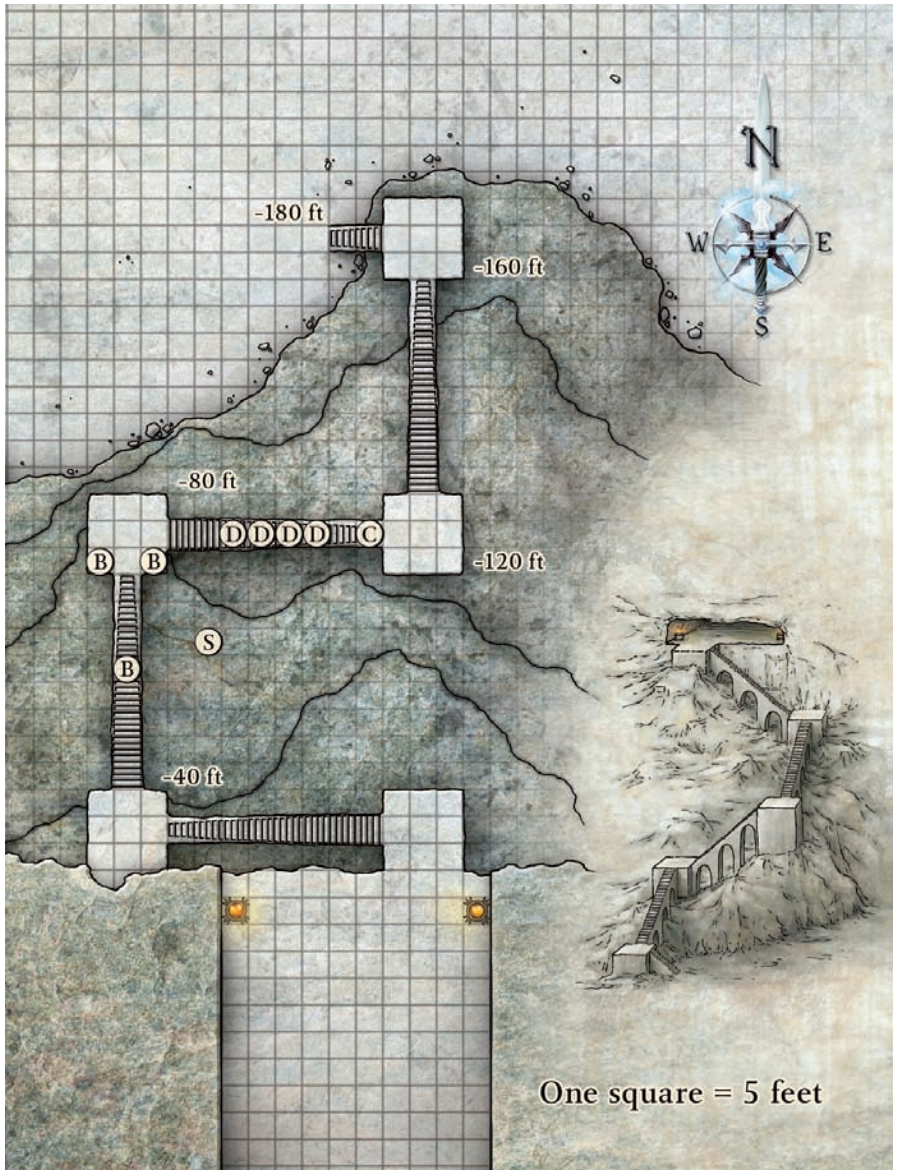
Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common, Giant
Skills Stealth +7
Str 14 (+2) **Dex** 15 (+2) **Wis** 9 (-1)
Con 14 (+2) **Int** 9 (-1) **Cha** 8 (-1)
Equipment leather armor, battleaxe, bellybow with 10 bolts

4 Orc Drudges (D) **Level 4 Minion**
Medium natural humanoid XP 44

Initiative +0 **Senses** Perception +0; low-light vision
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.
AC 16; **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 12, **Will** 12
Speed 6 (8 while charging)

⨁ **Club** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+9 vs. AC; 5 damage.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common, Giant
Str 16 (+5) **Dex** 10 (+2) **Wis** 10 (+2)
Con 14 (+4) **Int** 8 (+1) **Cha** 9 (+1)
Equipment hide armor, club


N
W
E
S
-180 ft
-160 ft
-80 ft
-120 ft
-40 ft
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S
One square = 5 feet

Chamber of Works

Encounter Level 6 (1,264 XP)

Setup

The Chamber of Works served two purposes. First, it connected to the deeper tunnels through a long, downward-sloping passage, and second, it housed the forges and workshops used by the priests to honor their god. The orcs discovered this passage in their searching beneath the mountain and came up through this room, slaughtering the dwarves as they raced into the complex to finish off the defenders.

Their haste to overrun the temple above caused them to miss Kalad, a devout dwarf paladin. While the orcs fought his kin upstairs, Kalad pulled the lever and collapsed the tunnel, thus cutting off the route for more orcs to breach the mountain. When Og, the orog hero, returned and found the tunnel caved-in, he was enraged and has spent the last few hours beating Kalad, bringing him to the brink of death.

1 raging fire
Og, orog hero (O)
1 orc eye of Gruumsh (G)
2 orc berserkers (B)
6 orc drudges (D)

When the characters enter this room, read:

A fearsome blaze rages on one side of this natural cavern, making silhouettes of the orcs gathered here. They seem intent on something on the opposite side of the room, where you can hear grunts and shouts above the roar of the flame.

Perception Check
DC 10: *The character spots a dwarf being beaten by a hulking orog warrior.*
DC 15: *The character hears the orog demand in broken Common that the dwarf open the tunnel.*

Tactics

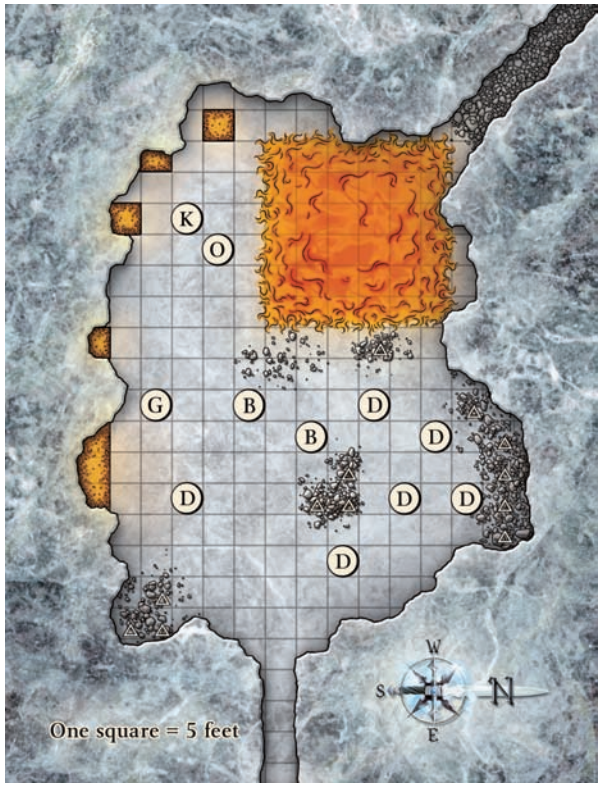
The orcs are distracted by Og and his prisoner and so they aren't paying attention when the PCs arrive, which allows the PCs to take advantage of surprise. Once the combat begins, the orcs turn, almost as one, loose angry shouts, and throw themselves recklessly at the intruders.

Og drops Kalad to the floor, draws his bastard sword and wades into the battle. He's irate, so if orc drudges block his path to the PCs, he doesn't think twice about cutting his way through to reach the characters. Once there, he uses *fearsome sweep* to rip through his opponents, adjusting his position each round to catch as many enemies as he can. The first character to hit him with a melee attack receives *lay him open* on Og's next turn. Og knows he has failed in his mission and sees this battle as his chance to redeem himself.

The eye of Gruumsh hangs back, knowing not to get in Og's way. He supports Og by hitting the PCs early with *chaos hammer* and then directs the battle by using *swift arm of destruction* to prod the berserkers into the thick of things. Even if the PCs corner the orc, he fights back with ferocity, using bull rush to shove PCs into forges or into the raging fire.

The orc berserkers sweep around from different directions to hit the PCs from either side, barking promises to each other that they'll meet in the middle. The drudges hoot and bark as they surge toward the intruders, laughing even as the PCs cut them down.

Should the battle turn against the orcs, Og pulls back to murder Kalad, who is too wounded to resist. Afterward, Og makes his stand adjacent to the flames to grab and flings his enemies into the roaring fire.



Features of the Area

Illumination: The roaring fire fills the room with bright light.

Ceiling: The ceiling is 30 feet overhead.

Rubble: When Kalad collapsed the tunnel to the deeper tunnels, parts of the ceiling in this room collapsed, killing a number of orcs in the process. Squares contain a substantial amount of rubble and count as difficult terrain.

Forge: All the intact forges are lit and roar with flame. Characters starting their turns adjacent to a

Og, Orog Hero (O) **Level 6 Elite Soldier**
Medium natural humanoid, orc XP 500
Initiative +5 **Senses** Perception +8; low-light vision
HP 144; **Bloodied** 72
AC 24; **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 16
Speed 5
⊕ **Bastard Sword** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+14 vs. AC; 1d10 + 5 damage, and the target is marked until the end of Og's next turn.
✧ **Fearsome Sweep** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Requires bastard sword; close burst 1; +14 vs. AC; 1d10 + 5 damage, and the target is marked until the end of Og's next turn.
↯ **Orog's Rebuke** (immediate reaction, when marked target shifts, moves, or makes an attack that does not include Og as a target; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Og makes a basic attack.
↯ **Lay Him Open** (standard; recharge when first bloodied) ✦ **Weapon**
Requires bastard sword; +14 vs. AC; 2d10 + 5 damage, and ongoing 5 damage (save ends). *Miss:* Half damage, and no ongoing damage.
Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Giant
Skills Intimidate +7
Str 20 (+8) **Dex** 15 (+5) **Wis** 10 (+3)
Con 16 (+6) **Int** 11 (+3) **Cha** 9 (+2)
Equipment plate armor, shield, bastard sword

2 Orc Berserkers (B) **Level 4 Brute**
Medium natural humanoid XP 175 each
Initiative +3 **Senses** Perception +2; low-light vision
HP 66; **Bloodied** 33; see also *warrior's surge*
AC 15; **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 13, **Will** 12
Speed 6 (8 while charging)
⊕ **Greataxe** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+8 vs. AC; 1d12 + 5 damage (crit 1d12 + 17).
↯ **Warrior's Surge** (standard, usable only while bloodied; encounter) ✦ **Healing, Weapon**
The orc berserker makes a melee basic attack and regains 16 hit points.
Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common, Giant
Skills Endurance +10, Intimidate +6
Str 20 (+7) **Dex** 13 (+3) **Wis** 10 (+2)
Con 16 (+5) **Int** 8 (+1) **Cha** 9 (+1)
Equipment leather armor, greataxe

6 Orc Drudges (D) **Level 4 Minion**
Medium natural humanoid XP 44 each
Initiative +0 **Senses** Perception +0; low-light vision
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.
AC 16; **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 12, **Will** 12
Speed 6 (8 while charging)
⊕ **Club** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+9 vs. AC; 5 damage.
Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common, Giant
Str 16 (+5) **Dex** 10 (+2) **Wis** 10 (+2)
Con 14 (+4) **Int** 8 (+1) **Cha** 9 (+1)
Equipment hide armor, club

Orc Eye of Gruumsh (G) **Level 5 Controller (Leader)**
Medium natural humanoid XP 200
Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +3; low-light vision
Wrath of Gruumsh aura 10; orcs in the aura can use *death strike* (see below).
HP 64; **Bloodied** 32; see also *warrior's surge* and *death strike*
AC 19; **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 15
Speed 6 (8 while charging)
⊕ **Spear** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+10 vs. AC; 1d8 + 3 damage.
↯ **Warrior's Surge** (standard, usable only while bloodied; encounter) ✦ **Healing, Weapon**
The eye of Gruumsh makes a melee basic attack and regains 16 hit points.
↯ **Death Strike** (when reduced to 0 hit points)
The eye of Gruumsh makes a melee basic attack.
✧ **Eye of Wrath** (minor; at-will) ✦ **Fear**
Ranged 5; +8 vs. Will; the target takes a –4 penalty to AC (save ends).
✧ **Swift Arm of Destruction** (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Healing**
Ranged 5; one orc within range makes a melee basic attack (as a free action) and regains 15 hit points on a hit or 5 hit points on a miss.
✧ **Chaos Hammer** (standard; encounter) ✦ **Force**
Area burst 1 within 10; +8 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 3 force damage, and the target is knocked prone. *Miss:* Half damage, and the target is not knocked prone.
Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common, Giant
Skills Endurance +9, Intimidate +10, Religion +7
Str 17 (+5) **Dex** 14 (+4) **Wis** 12 (+3)
Con 16 (+5) **Int** 11 (+2) **Cha** 17 (+5)
Equipment leather armor, fur cloak, spear

forge take 5 fire damage. Forges count as difficult terrain and characters entering or starting their turn inside a space containing a forge take 10 fire damage and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).

Caved-In Tunnel: The tunnel leading through the mountain has been collapsed for at least 2 miles. Movement through the tunnel is impossible.

Raging Fire **Level 2 Blaster**
Hazard XP 250
Damage to one of the forges caused hot coals to spill onto the floor and set fire to discarded materials. The fire is now out of control and is spreading across the room. At the start of the encounter, the fire fills a 6-square-by-6-square area.
Hazard: A 6-by-6 square area has a fire.
Perception
No check is necessary to notice the fire.
✦DC 16: The character notices the fire is spreading.
Trigger
When a creature enters a space adjacent to the raging fire or starts its turn in a space adjacent to or inside the raging fire, the raging fire attacks.
Attack
Free Action **Melee** 1
Target: The triggering creature
Attack: +6 vs. Reflex
Special: The raging fire gains a +5 bonus to its attack roll if the target stands inside the fire.
Hit: 2d6 fire damage and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).
Miss: Half damage, and no ongoing damage.
Effect: The fire also provides concealment to all creatures inside it and within 2 squares of it.
Special: Each time the fire attacks, it spreads into its target's space whether it hits or misses.
Countermeasures
✦A character can move into a square of raging fire or a square adjacent to the raging fire without triggering the attack with a DC 20 Acrobatics check.
✦Two gallons of water destroys 1 square of raging fire.
✦Targeting 1 or more squares with a water attack automatically destroys the fire in those squares.

Kalad

Once the characters defeat Og and his warriors, they can find Kalad crumpled on the floor in the space indicated on the tactical map. Assuming the characters stopped Og before he could kill the dwarf, the PCs can talk with the last dwarf of the monastery. Failing that, the characters might take Kalad's remains back to Overlook to have him raised by the Raise Dead ritual or converse with him using Speak with Dead. In any event, Kalad is helpful, for he knows what's at stake if the orcs come through the mountains.

Using Kalad

Provided Kalad survives (or is restored to life), the dwarf can be an invaluable aid to the PCs as they work to complete their quest. Kalad knows how to seal the Nexus, thus closing off all the passages through the mountains and forcing the orcs and orogs to face Bordrin's Watch. He also has a good idea about how to reach the Nexus (granting a +2 bonus to all checks made to navigate the Vents; see below). Finally, he also has a score to settle against the orcs and gladly accompanies the PCs on the final leg of their mission with no convincing required. Should any of the PCs think to mention the tunnels beneath Bordrin's Watch, Kalad mentions they are already sealed, for he closed them a few days ago after the news of the approaching army grew dire.

As for the Vents, Kalad insists they go to the tunnels to make certain the other group completed their mission. "There's too much at stake, friends!" He adds, "it's a labyrinth down there, easy to get turned around. Would you risk the lives of everyone in that valley on the efforts of just one group?"

Description

Kalad is tall for a dwarf, thickly muscled, but his beard was savagely cut from his face and his injuries are extensive (he's at 1 hit point and out of healing surges). His armor and weapon are still inside the Chamber of Works, and he dons them when he can. Even when fully recovered, he has a haunted look about him, for he's plagued with the horrors of the attack and he won't know peace until the orcs are stopped.

Deeply pious, as one would expect of a holy warrior, Kalad spends a portion of each day in deep prayer, calling out to his god for guidance, comfort, and a renewal of his resolve to continue his fight against the darkness. Outside these private times, Kalad is friendly, if gruff, constant in his support, but always detached. He doesn't have much use for humor and ignores the banter of those around him. He has a mission and he intends to see it to its end. He might be reserved in his relations, but the PCs couldn't ask for a more

Kalad the Paladin **Level 4 Elite Soldier**
Medium natural humanoid, dwarf XP 350

Initiative +4 **Senses** Perception +4; low-light vision
HP 54; **Bloodied** 27
AC 21; **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 16
Saving Throws +2; +7 against poison effects
Speed 5
Action Points 1

⊕ **Greataxe** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+8 vs. AC; 1d12 + 3 damage (crit 1d12 + 18), and the target is marked until the end of Kalad's next turn. If the target moves or makes an attack that does not include Kalad as the target, the target takes 5 radiant damage.

⸸ **Arcing Smite** (standard; encounter) ✦ **Weapon**
One or two creatures; +8 vs. AC, one attack per target; 1d12 + 3 damage (crit 1d12 + 18) damage, and the target is marked until end of Kalad's next turn.

⸸ **Holy Strike** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Radiant, Weapon**
+8 vs. AC; 1d12 + 3 damage (crit 1d12 + 18) radiant damage, and if Kalad marked the target, he deals an extra 2 radiant damage.

✧ **Sacred Circle** (standard; daily) ✦ **Zone**
Close burst 3; the burst creates a zone that, until the end of the encounter, gives Kalad and allies within it a +1 power bonus to AC.

Divine Strength (minor; encounter)
Kalad applies his Strength modifier as extra damage on his next attack this turn.

Stand Your Ground
When an effect forces Kalad to move—through a pull, a push, or a slide—he moves 1 square less than the effect specifies. When an attack would knock Kalad prone, he can roll a saving throw to avoid falling prone.

Alignment Lawful good **Languages** Common, Dwarven
Skills Dungeoneering +6, Endurance +11, Heal +9, History +7, Religion +7

Str 17 (+5)	**Dex** 10 (+2)	**Wis** 14 (+4)
Con 14 (+4)	**Int** 11 (+2)	**Cha** 14 (+4)

Equipment plate armor, greataxe

committed ally. Kalad sees the PCs as divine agents—heroes sent by the gods to save him and reveal to him his life's purpose. Thus, he watches the characters for further revelations that might shed light on what lies in store for him next.

Unexpected Developments

Upon rescuing Kalad, the adventurers learn that the dwarf paladin has sealed two of the three possible routes through the mountain. If the PCs didn't save the paladin or if they dismiss his warnings, the characters might head up to Bordrin's Watch to lend support to the troops, or worse, head back to Overlook, believing their mission is complete. Both possibilities can cause difficulties in resolving the adventure, since extended time in the city or at the fortress takes the adventure into unexpected directions. Naturally, if you're comfortable with reworking the plot on the fly or even adapting the adventure for a different sort of outcome, you can go with the flow. On the other hand, you could try any of the following options to get the adventure back on track.

Extend the Timetable: For groups at the fortress or the city, you can extend the length of time it takes for Tusk's armies to arrive. Eventually, when the Farstriders never make it back, the Council of Elders grow worried enough to send the PCs or the Freeriders into the Vents to make sure the job was done.

Shift the Perspective: Without Kalad, the characters have an even chance of going back to the city or heading up to the fortress. To deal with this eventuality, adjust the plot so that, in the case of Bordrin's Watch, the tunnel was never sealed and the characters stumble across the entrance while patrolling the walls of the fortress, or, in the case of the city, all three groups succeed, but a fourth entrance exists, but this time underneath Caer Overlook. In either case, you can use the encounters described under the Vents by changing the location of the entrance.

Let the Orcs Through: For particularly stubborn groups, you might just let the orcs break through. A host of a thousand orcs spilling out of the Vents ought to be enough to grab their attention. Just treat the orcs as an advance force so the PCs, should they choose to enter the dungeon, can still face Tusk at the conclusion.

Even when fully recovered, he has a haunted look about him, for he's plagued with the horrors of the attack . . .

Go with the Flow: Finally, no group likes to be "railroaded" by an adventure. Take a step back, relax, and let the players decide what to do and where to go. Depending on the players' choices, you might shift the action so that it occurs in different ways. Perhaps instead of braving the Vents, the PCs fail to close the Nexus and the orcs encircle Overlook and crush Bordrin's Watch. The PCs might be trapped in the city, hiding behind the walls along with everyone else. They might undertake a mission to infiltrate the orc armies to find and destroy Tusk in the hopes of unraveling the glue that holds this force together. This doesn't require a lot of work; you need only change the dynamics of the battlefield, alter the order of encounters, insert a few extra ones, and remove a few unnecessary ones and the adventure can still come to a satisfactory end.

The Vents

The Vents are easy to find, even if they are several miles away near the foot of the mountains, for the steam rising from the fissures is visible from quite a distance, so there is no challenge in reaching the these caves. Once the characters reach the vents, read or paraphrase the following text:

Scattered across the lower slopes are numerous steaming fissures, some as small as tiny cracks in the stone with others large enough to accommodate an ogre. The rocks here are slippery and aside from ropes of brown-black fungus, moss, and lichen, nothing lives here. The air stinks of sulfur and grows stronger nearest the plumes of acrid smoke wafting up from the holes.

About a hundred feet down from the lowest cracks is a campsite. There, you see five horses tied up and empty feedbags hanging from their heads.

Perception Check
DC 18: *A smothered campfire sits a few yards away from the horses.*
DC 22: *Footprints lead into one of the larger openings.*
DC 26: *There are five different sets of prints. There's no sign of any prints coming out.*

The Farstriders camped outside the tunnels when they arrived and set out at first light on the day after the PCs set out for the monastery. These adventurers went in and never came out again, falling victim to the orcs already infesting the tunnels.

When the PCs are ready to proceed, they can enter through any of the entrances and make their way through the maze of tunnels. A map is not provided for the first leg of their descent, since the characters must rely on instincts and cunning to make their way to the deeper tunnels and, eventually, the Nexus.

Setup: The entrances on the mountainside all worm into the rock, tangling into a convoluted network of passages and chambers that are thick with mist and slippery with moisture. The adventurers must navigate these passages using a variety of skills to reach the deeper tunnels.

Level: 3.

Complexity: 2 (requires 6 successes before 3 failures).

Primary Skills: Athletics, Dungeoneering, Endurance, Perception.

Special: If Kalad is with the PCs, they gain a +2 bonus to all checks made during the challenge. Once the characters succeed on the challenge, they gain a +2 bonus to all checks each time they repeat it.

Athletics (DC 15): Working through the tunnels, the characters need to squeeze through tight spots, leap across smoking cracks, climb slippery walls, and perform a variety of physical stunts. At least three characters must make a successful Athletics checks to overcome these obstacles. In addition to counting as a failure, a failed check indicates each party member loses 1 healing surge from injuries sustained while traveling.

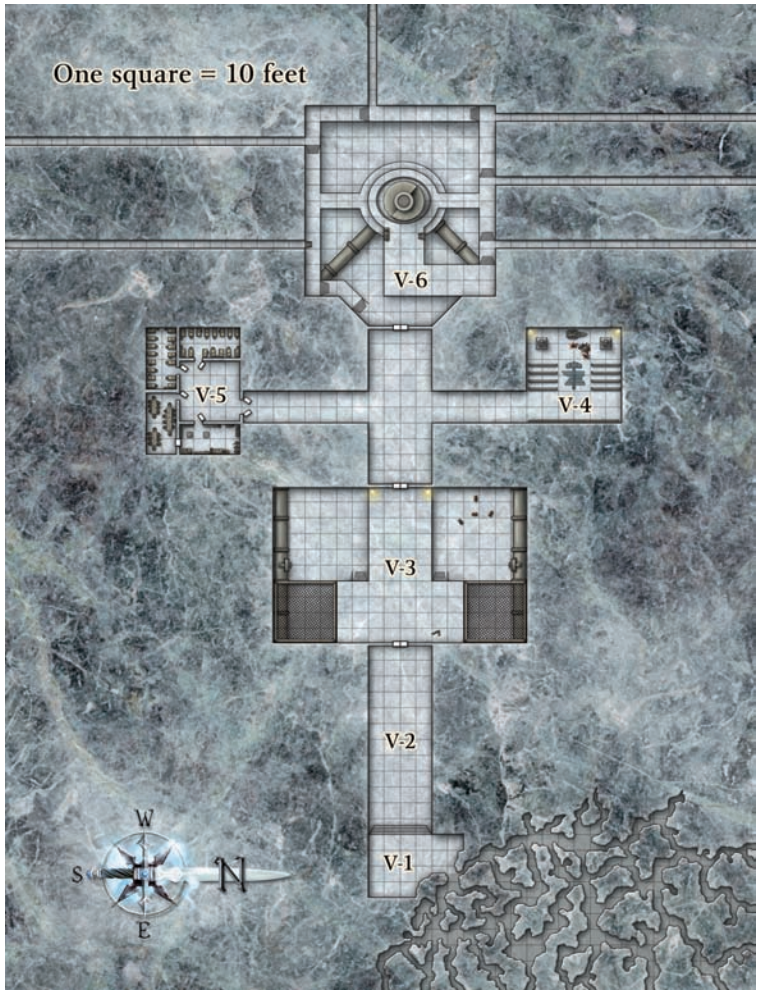
Dungeoneering (DC 20): A character experienced in spelunking can make a successful Dungeoneering check to help navigate the tunnels. A successful check counts as a success or removes 1 failure. A successful DC 25 Dungeoneering check also grants the characters an extra +4 bonus to all other checks related to this skill challenge (one-time bonus).

Endurance (DC 15): There's nothing easy about this descent and the poor air and dangerous environment is taxing. At least two characters must make successful Endurance checks to preserve their stamina and avoid fatigue, injury, and exhaustion. Failed checks result in everyone in the party losing 1 healing surge in addition to counting as a failure.

Perception (DC 20): A character can attempt a Perception check to notice tracks left by the Farstriders. A successful check counts as two successes. Once made, the characters cannot use Perception again for this skill challenge.

Success: The characters reach the lower tunnels intact.

Failure: The characters are turned around and come to a cave mouth 3d6 squares from the cave they first entered. They must start the skill challenge again to reach the deeper tunnels, though they gain a +2 bonus to their skill checks since they eliminate one possible route from their travels.



Deeper Tunnels

Once the characters successfully make their way through the Vents, they reach an old network of excavated passages and chambers. An advance troop of orcs have breached these tunnels, but they have not yet found their way through the Vents. As they make ready to plunge into the misty tunnels, Tusk and his cadre are even now closing in on the Nexus, leading

a large force through the western tunnels to take Bordrin's Watch from behind.

Extended Rest

Once the characters enter the deeper tunnels, they have no place to take an extended rest safely, so they must use their resources wisely, preserving their strength until the final encounter. Should disaster strike, the characters can retreat to the Vents and hole up there until they recover enough to complete the adventure. Unless you have an unusually small group of characters, let the PCs use this option once. If they try to do it again, Tusk should break free. See Unexpected Developments on the previous page for tips on how to adjust the plot for this potential outcome.

The Vents Overview

The Vents are a complex series of tunnels that leak out a sulfurous steam and the occasional burst of noxious smoke. Navigating the Vents is dangerous because it's easy to get turned around and hidden dangers lurk in the dark.

The vents include the following encounter areas.

V1. Entering the Vents

Beyond the mazelike Vents is the buried passage, a hidden route through the mountains beneath Bordrin's Watch far above. Opening onto the rest of the complex is a simple antechamber, shrouded in mist. Here a band of orcs, having survived a gauntlet of traps, argue about their next course of action.

Tactical Encounter: "Entering the Vents" (page 42).

V2. The Gauntlet

To safeguard the deep passage, the dwarf architects constructed a nasty trap and placed construct guardians in this long corridor. Evidence of its lethality can be seen in the orc corpses littering the floor.

Tactical Encounter: "The Gauntlet" (page 43).

V3. The Boiler Room

Central to protecting the subterranean route is the ability to close off the Nexus (see V6) by filling that room with water. This chamber houses the water reservoirs, which are kept at boiling temperatures to scald as well as drown intruders. Currently, Tusk's agents explore this chamber to ascertain its purpose and function.

Tactical Encounter: "The Boiler Room" (page 44).

V4. Shrine to Moradin

The dwarves that built this place were devout followers of Moradin and in between shifts of guarding and expanding the tunnels, they congregated here to receive the blessings and protections of their priests. Now, the site is the lair of a ravenous cave troll and its handlers.

Tactical Encounter: "Shrine to Moradin" (page 46).

V5. Dwarf Quarters

These chambers once billeted the dwarf miners, warriors, and priests, but little of their presence remains with the orc infestation. Orc soldiers explore these rooms in search of plunder and grow frustrated by the spartan rooms.

Tactical Encounter: "Dwarf Quarters" (page 48).

V6. The Nexus

When the tunnels are compromised by enemy forces, the dwarves can seal off access by activating a complex trap that causes the doors to seal shut and the room to fill with water. However, with the dwarves largely wiped out, the orcs control this room and they intend to use it to breach Bordrin's Watch above.

Tactical Encounter: "The Nexus" (page 49).

Conclusion

Once the characters seal the Nexus and defeat Tusk, they have completed their mission, but more importantly, they have delivered a deathblow to the orc hordes. With their leader dead and cut off from the tunnels, the orcs have no choice but to attack Bordrin's Watch. The fighting is brutal, for even though the orcs have lost their advantage, they are still numerous and powerful. After five days of fighting, the defenders on the walls turn back the hordes, sending them back into the badlands once more. With the threat at an end, the surviving PCs are welcomed as heroes and given badges of distinction to recognize their courageous efforts and their parts in saving Overlook and Elsir Vale. During the ceremony, the adventurers are free to relax, drink, and enjoy some well-deserved downtime, but they can't help but feel like they're being watched.

Entering the Vents

Encounter Level 1 (500 XP)

Setup

Having survived the Gauntlet (V2), the orcs have rested and now make ready to venture into the Vents. The orcs lost most of their drudges in the trapped corridor behind them, so they are demoralized and a bit nervous about what is ahead.

1 orc sergeant (S)
1 orc bombardier (B)
2 orc freaks (F)

When the characters enter this room, read:

Four orcs engage in a heated argument, one pointing back into the corridor behind them. The biggest of the lot points in your direction, growling deep in his chest.

2 Orc Freaks (F)	Level 2 Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid	XP 125 each
Initiative +5	**Senses** Perception +5; low-light vision
HP 38; **Bloodied** 19; see also *warrior's surge*	
AC 15; **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 11	
Speed 6 (8 while charging)	
(+) **Battleaxe** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+6 vs. AC; 1d10 + 3 damage.	
↓ **Savage Strike** (standard; encounter) ✦ **Weapon**	
Make two attacks; +6 vs. AC; 1d10 + 3 damage per attack. If both attacks hit the same target, the target also takes ongoing 5 damage (save ends).	
↓ **Warrior's Surge** (standard, usable only while bloodied; encounter) ✦ **Healing, Weapon**	
The orc freak makes a melee basic attack and regains 9 hit points.	
Alignment Chaotic evil	**Languages** Common, Giant
Skills Athletics +9	
Str 17 (+4)	**Dex** 15 (+3) **Wis** 8 (+0)
Con 14 (+3)	**Int** 8 (+0) **Cha** 7 (-1)
Equipment hide armor, 2 battleaxes	

Tactics

The orcs are arguing, but they abandon their dispute at the first sign of intruders. If the sergeant falls, the bombardier and the freaks move back into V2 to trigger the trap and cause a bit more mayhem.

Features of the Area

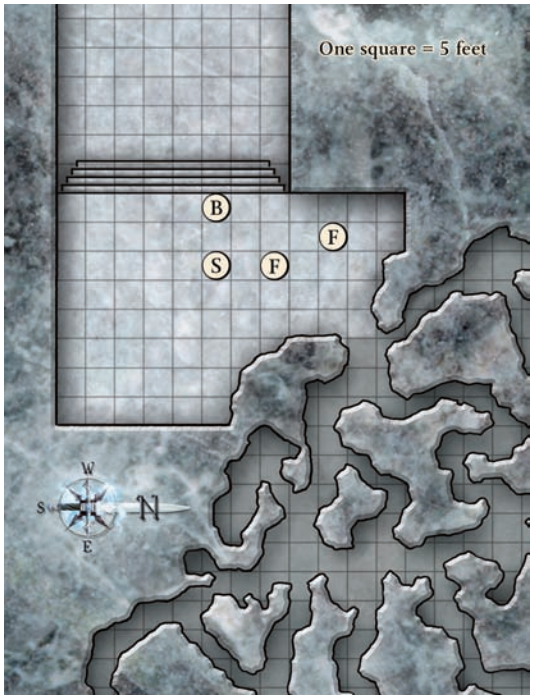
Illumination: One of the orcs carries an everburning torch, which fills the room with bright light.

Ceiling: The ceiling is 15 feet tall.

Mist: The tunnels leading to the Vents are filled with mist. Characters inside these tunnels gain concealment.

Stairs: The western stairs lead down to V2. Each square containing stairs counts as difficult terrain.

Orc Bombardier (B)	Level 1 Artillery
Medium natural humanoid	XP 100
Initiative +3	**Senses** Perception -2; low-light vision
HP 24; **Bloodied** 12; see also *warrior's surge*	
AC 13; **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 11	
Speed 6 (8 while charging)	
(+) **Battleaxe** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+5 vs. AC; 1d10 + 2 damage.	
↓ **Warrior's Surge** (standard, usable only while bloodied; encounter) ✦ **Healing, Weapon**	
The orc bombardier makes a melee basic attack and regains 6 hit points.	
✲ **Cinderbomb** (standard; recharge ⚅ ⚄ ⚃) ✦ **Fire**	
Area burst 2 within 10; +4 vs. Reflex; 1d8 + 3 fire damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends). On a crit, the orc bombardier knocks the target prone. *Miss:* Half damage, and no ongoing damage.	
✧ **Detonation** (no action, when reduced to 0 hit points; encounter) ✦ **Fire**	
The orc bombardier must have at least one cinderbomb left; close burst 2; +4 vs. Reflex; 1d8 + 3 fire damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends) (crit knock prone). *Miss:* Half damage, and no ongoing damage.	
Alignment Chaotic evil	**Languages** Common, Giant
Str 13 (+1)	**Dex** 17 (+3) **Wis** 7 (-2)
Con 12 (+1)	**Int** 8 (-1) **Cha** 9 (-1)
Equipment battleaxe, 3 cinderbombs, everburning torch	



Orc Sergeant (S)	Level 3 Soldier (Leader)
Medium natural humanoid	XP 150
Initiative +2	**Senses** Perception +5; low-light vision
Lead by Fear aura 1; orcs inside the aura gain a +1 power bonus to attack rolls.	
HP 46; **Bloodied** 23; see also *warrior's surge*	
AC 19; **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 13, **Will** 14	
Speed 6 (8 while charging)	
(+) **Glaive** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
Reach 2; +10 vs. AC; 2d4 + 4 damage.	
↓ **Warrior's Surge** (standard, usable only while bloodied; encounter) ✦ **Healing**	
The orc sergeant makes a melee basic attack and regains 11 hit points.	
Back to the Front! (immediate reaction, when orc ally within 5 squares is forcibly moved; at-will)	
Slide triggering ally 1 square.	
Alignment Chaotic evil	**Languages** Common, Giant
Skills Endurance +5, Intimidate +5	
Str 19 (+5)	**Dex** 9 (+0) **Wis** 13 (+2)
Con 14 (+3)	**Int** 11 (+1) **Cha** 11 (+1)
Equipment chainmail, glaive, tattered cloak	

The Gauntlet

Encounter Level 3 (775 XP)

Setup

The dwarves created a trio of homunculi to protect the Nexus. Supporting the guardians is a nasty trap. If the group dealt with the orcs in V1 easily, assume the trap in this room is already sprung.

1 arbalester (A)
2 iron defenders (I)
4 crossbow turrets (T, turrets; P, pressure plates)

When the characters can see the corridor, read:

A wide corridor stretches before you and ends at a pair of double doors. About halfway down, you see a strange creature that resembles a crossbow with legs, flanked by two iron dogs.

Tactics

The defenders guard the arbalester, while the arbalester guards the doors. If an intruder moves for the control panel, a defender moves to intercept.

Features of the Area

Illumination: None. This room is dark

Ceiling: The ceiling here is 20 feet tall.

Double Doors: A pair of bronze doors stand closed at the end of the hall. The doors are not locked.

Magic Crossbow Turret **Level 3 Elite Blaster**
Trap 300 XP

Four armored crossbow turrets drop from the ceiling at the edge of the room. Each round they pepper the area with quarrels.

Trap: Four crossbows attack each round on their initiative after they are triggered.

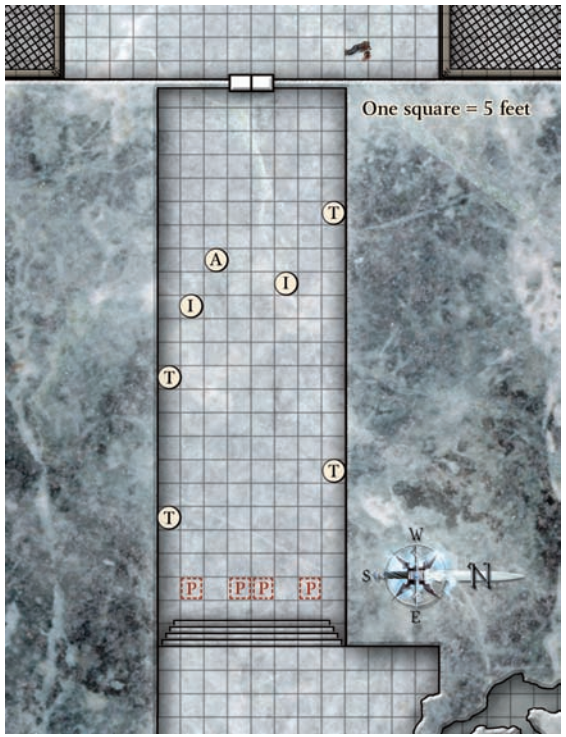
Perception
✦DC 22: The character notices the trigger plates.
✦DC 27: The character notices the location of the turrets.
✦DC 22: The character notices the location of the hidden control panel.
Initiative +3

Trigger
The trap activates and rolls initiative when a character enters one of the four trigger squares in the room.

Attack
Standard Action **Ranged** 10
Targets: Each crossbow attacks one intruder (any nondwarf, nonhomunculus). It magically distinguishes intruders from the natives of the dungeon.
Attack: +8 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 3 damage

Countermeasures
✦A character who makes a successful Athletics check (DC 6 or DC 11 without a running start) can jump over a single pressure plate square.
✦An adjacent character can disable a trigger plate with a DC 27 Thievery check.
✦Attacking a trigger plate (AC 12, other defenses 10) only triggers the trap
✦A character can attack a turret (AC 16, other defenses 13; hp 38). Destroying a turret stops its attacks.
✦A character can engage in a skill challenge to deactivate the control panel, DC 20 Thievery. Complexity 2 (6 successes before 3 failures). Success disables the trap. Failure causes the control panel to explode (close blast 3, 2d6 + 3 damage to all creatures in blast) and the trap remains active.

2 Iron Defenders (I) **Level 3 Soldier**
Medium natural animate (construct, homunculus) XP 150 each
Initiative +5 **Senses** Perception +6; darkvision
HP 47; **Bloodied** 23
AC 18; **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 13
Immune disease, poison
Speed 6
⨺ **Bite** (standard; at-will)
+8 vs. AC; 1d8 + 3 damage.
↯ **Guard Creature** (immediate reaction, when an adjacent enemy attacks the creature guarded by the iron defender; at-will)
The iron defender makes a bite attack against the enemy.
Pursue and Attack
When the iron defender makes an opportunity attack, it shifts 1 square before or after the attack.
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Str 16 (+4) **Dex** 15 (+3) **Wis** 11 (+1)
Con 15 (+3) **Int** 5 (-2) **Cha** 8 (+0)



Arbalester (A) **Level 4 Artillery**
Medium natural animate (construct, homunculus) XP 175
Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +8; darkvision
HP 43; **Bloodied** 21
AC 17; **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 15
Immune disease, poison
Speed 6
⨺ **Slam** (standard; at-will)
+4 vs. AC; 1d4 + 2 damage.
➢ **Bolt** (standard; at-will)
Ranged 20/40; +9 vs. AC; 1d8 + 4 damage.
➢ **Double Shot** (standard; recharge ⚅ ⚄ ⚃; see also *guard area*)
The arbalester makes a bolt attack against two different targets within 5 squares of each other.
Guard Area
At the start of the arbalester's turn, if an enemy is in its guarded area, the arbalester recharges its *double shot* power.
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Str 15 (+4) **Dex** 18 (+6) **Wis** 12 (+3)
Con 13 (+3) **Int** 5 (-1) **Cha** 3 (-2)

Boiler Room

Encounter Level 5 (1,095 XP)

Setup

The dark one emissary is one of the servants of Tusk who arranged the deal to assist the orog chieftain in infiltrating the tunnels below the Stonehome Mountains. He and his cohorts have just arrived in this chamber, and he's examining one of the valves to determine its function. The orcs are milling around, waiting for him to finish.

1 dark one emissary (D)
3 orc scouts (S)
3 fire beetles (F)
5 orc drudges (O)

When the characters enter this room, read:

The doors open a platform overlooking an enormous chamber. A group of orcs turns to face you, growling with rage and drooling with anticipation for the kill. Behind and below the orcs lies a sunken section of the chamber, where you see iron tubes as tall as a man running across the room. On the north side of the pit, you spot several large beetles, their mottled hides glowing red as if aflame.

Perception Check
DC 22: *A short humanoid wearing a long black cloak is examining an iron wheel connected to the southern pipe.*

Tactics

The orcs mobilize when they notice the PCs, and the drudges charge while the scouts fall back to hit the PCs with ranged attacks. The fire beetles, while not allied with the orcs, are hungry and attack the closest living creature they can reach. The orcs fight to the death.

The dark one emissary is far more cautious. It joins the fight straightaway, but stays on the edge, moving in to stab at the PCs, using *dark step,* and then darts away. If the dark one becomes bloodied, it flees through the door to the west to warn the creatures in V4 of the impending attack.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Two everburning torches sit in iron sconces on either side of the iron door set in the center of the west wall.

Ceiling: The ceiling, from the main level, is 20 feet overhead.

Stone Walk: Bisecting this room, at the level at which the doors stand, is a stone walkway connecting the eastern doors to the west.

Scaffolding: Branching out to the south and north is a floor made of iron mesh. The mesh allows sight to the level below but blocks all attacks.

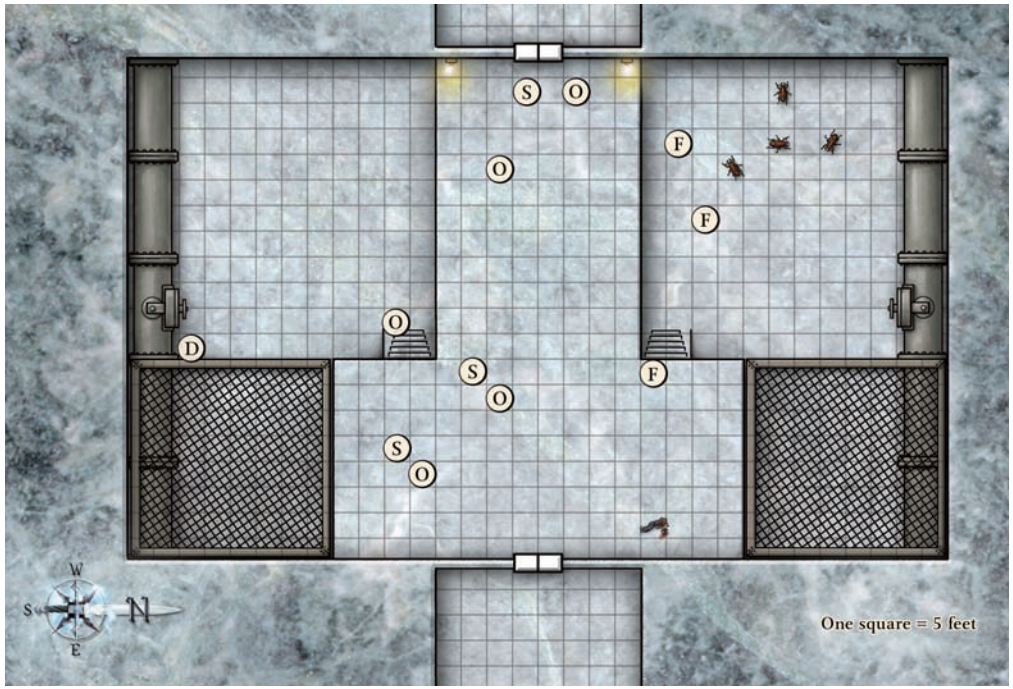
Lower Level: Beneath the stone walk and scaffolding is a lower level, about 20 feet below the doors leading into and out of this room, and reached by twin staircases descending from the eastern platform.

Iron Door: The iron door to the north is closed, but not locked. It has been magically treated to resist rust.

Fire Beetle Carcasses: The fire beetles attacked the first group of orcs, but were driven back. The carcasses mark those beetles killed by the orcs. Squares containing dead beetles count as difficult terrain.

Stairs: The stairs leading to the lower level count as difficult terrain.

Hot Pipe: Two 10-foot wide pipes run across the lower level of the room, emerging from the eastern wall and exiting through the west. The pipes carry scalding water to the Nexus. The valves (see below)



are closed, so only the pipes east of the valves are hot. If the valves are opened, the entire pipe becomes hot. Characters touching a hot pipe take 5 fire damage.

Valves: Each pipe is fitted with a valve that can be opened or shut with a successful DC 13 Strength check. Opening the valves is necessary to seal the Nexus. A DC 22 Dungeoneering check reveals the general function of these valves. If Kalad is present, once the creatures are all dealt with, he moves to open each valve.

Dead Adventurer: Sprawled across the floor is the beheaded remains of Jen, the half-elf warlock and member of the Farstriders. She was killed by the orc sergeant at V1.

3 Orc Scouts (S) **Level 3 Skirmisher**
Medium natural humanoid XP 150 each

Initiative +5 **Senses** Perception +6; low-light vision
HP 46; **Bloodied** 23; see also *warrior's surge*
AC 17; **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 13
Speed 6 (8 while charging)

(standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Scimitar
+8 vs. AC; 1d8 + 3 damage (crit: +1d8).

(standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Longbow
Ranged 20/40; +7 vs. AC; 1d10 + 2 damage.

(standard, usable only while bloodied; encounter) ✦ **Healing, Weapon**
Warrior's Surge
The orc scout makes a melee basic attack and regains 11 hit points.

Overeager (immediate reaction, when the orc scout drops an enemy with a ranged attack; encounter)
The orc scout draws its scimitar and charges the closest enemy.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common, Giant
Skills Athletics +9, Endurance +8, Intimidate +5, Stealth +8
Str 16 (+4) **Dex** 15 (+3) **Wis** 10 (+1)
Con 14 (+3) **Int** 8 (+0) **Cha** 9 (+0)
Equipment leather armor, scimitar, longbow with quiver of 20 arrows

Dark One Emissary (D) **Level 5 Lurker**
Small shadow humanoid XP 200

Initiative +11 **Senses** Perception +9; darkvision
HP 48; **Bloodied** 24; see also *killing dark*
AC 20 (see also *dark step*); **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 17
Speed 6

(standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Dagger
+10 vs. AC; 1d4 + 5 damage.

(standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Dagger
Ranged 5/10; +10 vs. AC; 1d4 + 5 damage.

Killing Dark (when reduced to 0 hit points)
Close burst 1; targets enemies; each target is blinded (save ends). When slain, a dark one emissary explodes in a spout of darkness.

Cloak of Shadow (minor; at-will) ✦ **Illusion**
The dark one emissary shifts 1 square and gains concealment until the end of its next turn.

Combat Advantage
The dark one emissary deals an extra 1d6 damage on melee and ranged attacks against any target it has combat advantage against.

Dark Step (move; at-will)
The dark one emissary moves up to 4 squares, gains a +4 bonus to AC against opportunity attacks, and gains combat advantage against any target that it ends its move adjacent to.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common
Skills Bluff +9, Intimidate +11, Stealth +12
Str 13 (+3) **Dex** 20 (+7) **Wis** 15 (+4)
Con 12 (+3) **Int** 14 (+4) **Cha** 14 (+4)
Equipment black garments, 5 daggers

3 Fire Beetles (F) **Level 1 Brute**
Small natural beast XP 100 each

Initiative +1 **Senses** Perception +0
HP 32; **Bloodied** 16
AC 13; **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 12, **Will** 11
Resist 10 fire
Speed 6

(standard; at-will)
Bite
+5 vs. AC; 2d4 + 2 damage.

(standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Fire**
Fire Spray
Close blast 3; +4 vs. Reflex; 3d6 fire damage.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Str 14 (+2) **Dex** 12 (+1) **Wis** 10 (+0)
Con 12 (+1) **Int** 1 (-5) **Cha** 8 (-1)

5 Orc Drudges (O) **Level 4 Minion**
Medium natural humanoid XP 44 each

Initiative +0 **Senses** Perception +0; low-light vision
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.
AC 16; **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 12, **Will** 12
Speed 6 (8 while charging)

(standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Club
+9 vs. AC; 5 damage.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common, Giant
Str 16 (+5) **Dex** 10 (+2) **Wis** 10 (+2)
Con 14 (+4) **Int** 8 (+1) **Cha** 9 (+1)
Equipment hide armor, club

Shrine to Moradin

Encounter Level 3 (764 XP)

Setup

The orcs in this room are responsible for their cave troll ally. The cave troll goes where and does what it likes. The orcs watch the monster devour the last of the Farstriders with a mixture of fear and envy.

1 cave troll (T)
2 orc bombardiers (B)
6 orc drudges (D)

When the characters enter this room, read:

Eight orcs and one big, hulking brute befoul this sacred chamber by their mere presence. The orcs, a mix of hideous humanoids, shout warnings when they see you, causing the cave troll to turn, which reveals the blood and gore painting its chest.

Perception Check
DC 18 (dwarf only): *You notice the altar shines brilliantly, as if Moradin was calling for you to purify this chamber.*

Tactics

The orcs and troll surge into battle, with the drudges charging where possible and the cave troll grabbing the first creature it can to use as an improvised weapon. The bombardiers hold back, flinging cinderbombs until they exhaust their supplies, at which point they close to fight hand to hand.

Cave Troll (T)	**Level 7 Brute**
Large natural humanoid	XP 300
Initiative +6	**Senses** Perception +9; low-light vision
HP 99; **Bloodied** 49; see also *troll healing*	
Regeneration 10 (if the cave troll takes acid or fire damage regeneration does not function until the end of its next turn)	
AC 19; **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 17	
Speed 8	
(+) **Claw** (standard; at-will)	
Reach 2; +10 vs. AC; 2d4 + 5 damage, and the target is grabbed (until escape). A cave troll can grab up to two targets at once.	
ǂ **Improvised Weapon** (standard; at-will)	
Requires grabbed creature; reach 2; +10 vs. AC; 2d8 + 5 damage, and the grabbed creature takes half this damage and is dazed (save ends). When grabbing a creature wearing heavy armor, the cave troll deals +5 damage with this attack, but the grabbed creature is not dazed.	
Troll Healing ✦ **Healing**	
If the cave troll is reduced to 0 hit points by an attack that does not deal acid or fire damage, it rises on its next turn (as a move action) with 10 hit points.	
Alignment Chaotic evil	**Languages** Giant
Skills Athletics +13, Endurance +12	
Str 21 (+8)	**Dex** 16 (+6)	**Wis** 12 (+4)
Con 19 (+7)	**Int** 5 (+0)	**Cha** 8 (+2)

Features of the Area

Illumination: Two everburning torches in iron sconces fill the room with bright light.

Ceiling: The ceiling in this room is 20 feet tall.

Stone Pews: Spaces containing stone pews count as difficult terrain. A DC 17 Strength check is required to shove a stone pew 1 square. If used in conjunction with a bull rush, the attack takes a –2 penalty, but the target is also knocked prone.

Altar: Any dwarf that starts its turn in a space adjacent to the altar gains a +2 power bonus to attack rolls until the end of the encounter.

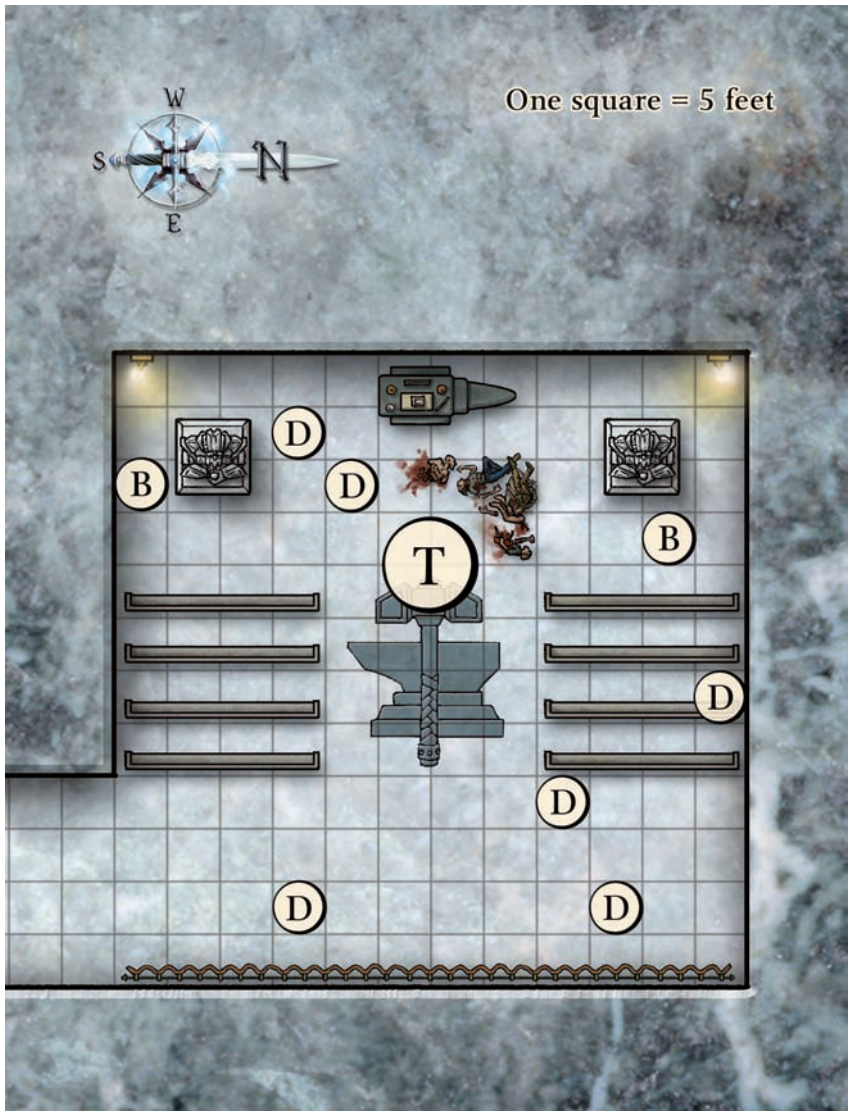
Tapestry: The tapestry recounts the construction of the Nexus. Characters who study it and succeed on a DC 18 Perception check determine that they must open the valves in room V3 to seal off the Nexus.

Dwarf Statues: The statues in this room stand 15-feet tall and depict dwarf warriors, head bowed as if in prayer or reflection. The statues are carved so the warriors look like they're wearing plate armor and both are armed with hammers. Climbing a statue requires a DC 20 Athletics check. The statue has AC 20, other defenses 18; hp 100; resist 10 to all damage.

Dead Adventurers: The troll has been eating the remaining members of the Farstriders. Bits of flesh, bone, and gear litter the floor here.

Orc Bombardier (B)	**Level 1 Artillery**
Medium natural humanoid	XP 100
Initiative +3	**Senses** Perception -2; low-light vision
HP 24; **Bloodied** 12; see also *warrior's surge*	
AC 13; **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 11	
Speed 6 (8 while charging)	
⊕ **Battleaxe** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+5 vs. AC; 1d10 + 2 damage.	
⚕ **Warrior's Surge** (standard, usable only while bloodied; encounter) ✦ **Healing, Weapon**	
The orc bombardier makes a melee basic attack and regains 6 hit points.	
✲ **Cinderbomb** (standard; recharge ⚅) ✦ **Fire**	
Area burst 2 within 10; +4 vs. Reflex; 1d8 + 3 fire damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends). On a crit, the orc bombardier knocks the target prone. *Miss:* Half damage, and no ongoing damage.	
✧ **Detonation** (no action, when reduced to 0 hit points; encounter) ✦ **Fire**	
The orc bombardier must have at least one cinderbomb left; close burst 2; +4 vs. Reflex; 1d8 + 3 fire damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends) (crit knock prone). *Miss:* Half damage, and no ongoing damage.	
Alignment Chaotic evil	**Languages** Common, Giant
Str 13 (+1)	**Dex** 17 (+3) **Wis** 7 (-2)
Con 12 (+1)	**Int** 8 (-1) **Cha** 9 (-1)
Equipment battleaxe, 3 cinderbombs	

6 Orc Drudges (O)	**Level 4 Minion**
Medium natural humanoid	XP 44 each
Initiative +0	**Senses** Perception +0; low-light vision
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	
AC 16; **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 12, **Will** 12	
Speed 6 (8 while charging)	
⊕ **Club** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+9 vs. AC; 5 damage.	
Alignment Chaotic evil	**Languages** Common, Giant
Str 16 (+5)	**Dex** 10 (+2) **Wis** 10 (+2)
Con 14 (+4)	**Int** 8 (+1) **Cha** 9 (+1)
Equipment hide armor, club	



Dwarf Quarters

Encounter Level 2 (645 XP)

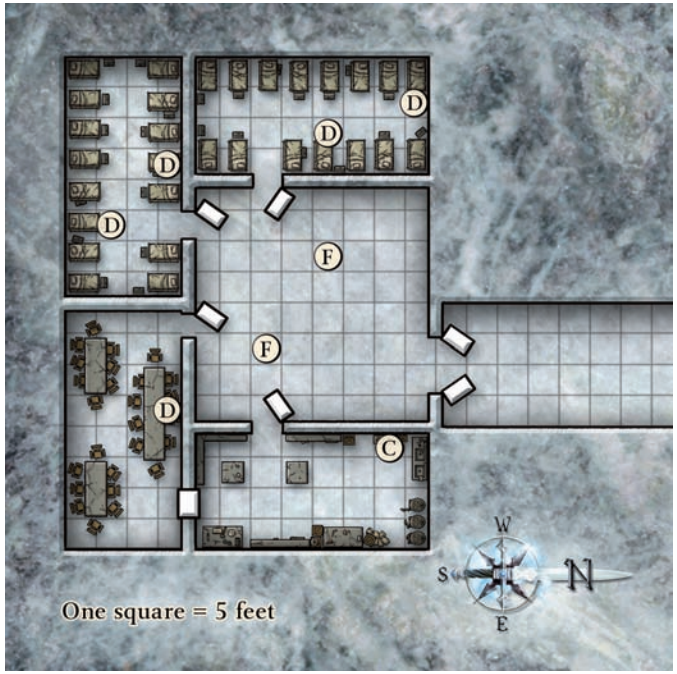
Setup

The orc freaks led a band of drudges here in search of loot. Unfortunately, the dwarves emptied these chambers years ago. What the orcs haven't discovered, however, is the presence of the cavern choker prepared to kill the first creature to enter the kitchens.

1 cavern choker (C)
2 orc freaks (F)
5 orc drudges (D)

When the characters near this room, read:

Flickering torchlight shines through an open door at the end of the hall.



2 Orc Freaks (F)	Level 2 Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid	XP 125 each

Initiative +5 **Senses** Perception +5; low-light vision
HP 38; **Bloodied** 19; see also *warrior's surge*
AC 15; **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 11
Speed 6 (8 while charging)

⊕ **Battleaxe** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+6 vs. AC; 1d10 + 3 damage.

⸸ **Savage Strike** (standard; encounter) ✦ **Weapon**
Make two attacks; +6 vs. AC; 1d10 + 3 damage per attack. If both attacks hit the same target, the target also takes ongoing 5 damage (save ends).

⸸ **Warrior's Surge** (standard, usable only while bloodied; encounter) ✦ **Healing, Weapon**
The orc freak makes a melee basic attack and regains 9 hit points.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common, Giant
Skills Athletics +9
Str 17 (+4) **Dex** 15 (+3) **Wis** 8 (+0)
Con 14 (+3) **Int** 8 (+0) **Cha** 7 (-1)
Equipment hide armor, 2 battleaxes

When the characters enter this room, read:

Two orcs hold torches, shining light in this cavernous chamber. Stone doors stand open, leading into other rooms.

Tactics

The orcs charge the PCs and fight to the death. The choker uses the resulting chaos as its chance to escape, striking a PC as it backs into the hall.

Features of the Area

Illumination: The orc freaks carry torches, each shedding bright light in a 10-square radius. Once combat begins, the orcs drop the torches. Each round, at the start of their turns, there's a 50% chance that the torch gutters out.

Ceiling: The ceilings here are 20-feet tall.

Barracks: The barracks hold bunk beds and empty chests.

5 Orc Drudges (D)	Level 4 Minion
Medium natural humanoid	XP 44 each

Initiative +0 **Senses** Perception +0; low-light vision
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.
AC 16; **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 12, **Will** 12
Speed 6 (8 while charging)

⊕ **Club** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+9 vs. AC; 5 damage.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common, Giant
Str 16 (+5) **Dex** 10 (+2) **Wis** 10 (+2)
Con 14 (+4) **Int** 8 (+1) **Cha** 9 (+1)
Equipment hide armor, club

Cavern Choker (C)	Level 4 Lurker
Small natural humanoid	XP 175

Initiative +9 **Senses** Perception +3; darkvision
HP 42; **Bloodied** 21
AC 17 (see also *chameleon hide*); **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 15 **Will** 13
Speed 6, climb 6 (spider climb)

⊕ **Tentacle Claw** (standard; at-will)
Reach 2; +9 vs. AC; 1d8 + 3 damage, and the target is grabbed (until escape). A target trying to escape the grab takes a -4 penalty to the check.

⸸ **Choke** (standard; at-will)
Grabbed target only; +9 vs. Fortitude; 1d8 + 3 damage.

Chameleon Hide (minor; at-will)
The cavern choker gains concealment until the start of its next turn. It can't use this power while grabbing a creature or while grabbed.

Body Shield (immediate interrupt, when targeted by a melee or a ranged attack against Reflex or AC; recharges when the choker makes a successful *tentacle claw* or *choke* attack)
The cavern choker makes its grabbed victim the target instead. The choker cannot use this power to redirect attacks made by a creature it is currently grabbing.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common
Skills Stealth +10
Str 17 (+5) **Dex** 17 (+5) **Wis** 13 (+3)
Con 12 (+3) **Int** 6 (+0) **Cha** 6 (+0)

Mess Hall: Dusty tables and benches fill out this room. Squares containing tables count as difficult terrain.

Kitchens: This room's walls are lined with empty cabinets and cold hearths.

The Nexus

Encounter Level 7 (1,590 XP)

Setup

When the characters first enter this chamber, there are no creatures. Once the PCs start climbing to the top, have the players roll for initiative. At the start of each round until the adventurers seal the Nexus, a wave of creatures enters the chamber. Roll 1d6 to determine which tunnel the enemies appear in and then roll for their initiative as normal, placing them at the mouth of the tunnel at the start of their turn. If the die results in a tunnel sealed off by the activated control panel, no additional creatures appear that round.

This encounter includes the following creatures organized by waves.

Wave One

2 orc drudges (D)

Wave Two

2 orc militants (M)
2 orc drudges (D)

Wave Three

Tusk (T)
Myrissa, shadar-kai dark warlock (S)
2 orc bolt throwers (B)

Wave Four and Onward

3 orc drudges (D)

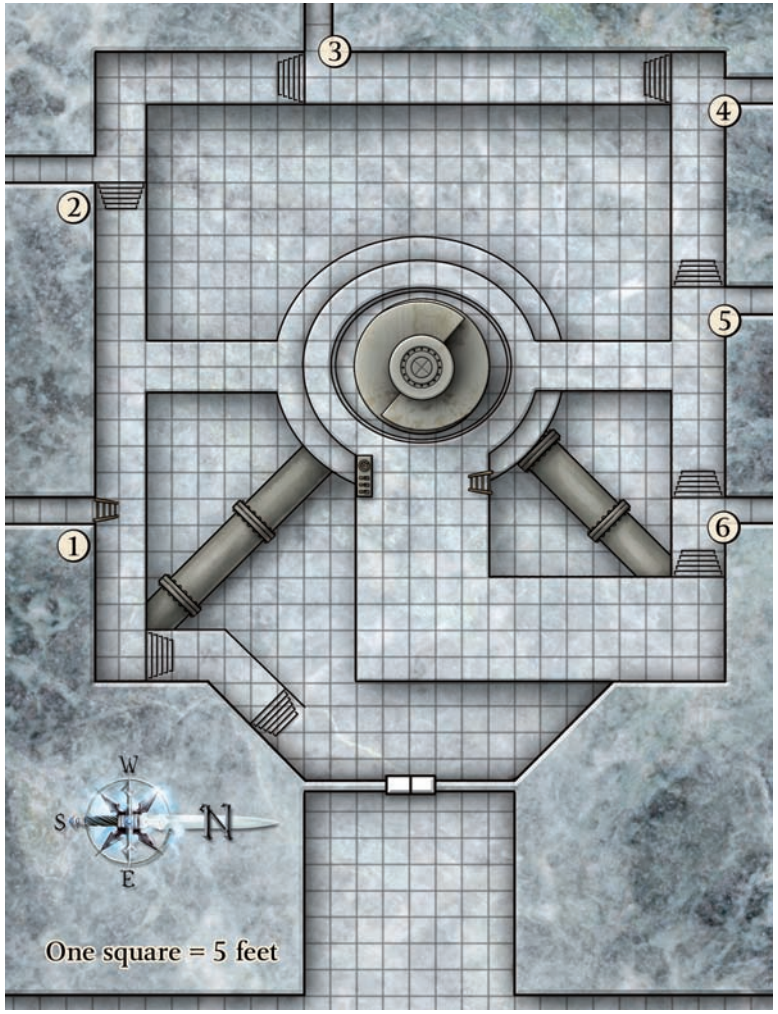
When the characters enter this room, read:

You step into a massive chamber in which the ceiling rises 100 feet above you. At the center of the chamber is a pillar of solid steel that is screwed into the stone and that stand as tall as the ceiling. Two bronze and steel pipes emerge from the eastern walls and travel toward the steel column before vanishing into the stone. Rising around the outside of the room is a stone catwalk that connects to steel grating that wraps around the steel pillar like scaffolding. Dark tunnels pock the walls, leading to who knows where.

Perception Check
DC 21: *You smell the faint odor of sulfur in this room.*
DC 26: *The stone around the base of the steel column is dark, as if damp.*

Tactics

Tusk's objective here is obvious: Stop the PCs from sealing the Nexus. Once he arrives, he heads straight for the top, smashing through allies and enemies to block the PCs' efforts. The drudges and bolt throwers harass the PCs and support their leader. Myrissa, finally, hits the characters with ranged attacks, hoping to slow their ascent or disrupt their efforts to activate the control panel. All the creatures here fight to the death.



Features of the Area

Illumination: This room is dark.

Ceiling: From the bottom of this room, the ceiling is 100 feet overhead.

Tunnels: Six passages, marked 1–6, lead into the chamber. The passages are 5-feet wide and lead off,

eventually coming out on the western side of the mountains.

Ladders: Two ladders are in this room. One leads to tunnel 1 and the other leads up to the escape hatch. Climbing a ladder requires a DC 5 Athletics check (DC 10 when in boiling water; see below). The ladders are 10 feet tall.

Stairs: Around the outer edge of the room, stairs climb up to higher levels. Stairs count as difficult terrain.

Platforms: The platforms are fashioned out of steel grating, which allows a character standing on them to see, but it blocks ranged and melee attacks.

Pipes: Two massive pipes run across the floor. When the valves in V3 are opened, any character touching them takes 5 fire damage.

Control Panel: The control panel stands at the top of the room. Activating the control panel requires a skill challenge. DC 18 Dungeoneering or Thievery. Complexity 1 (4 successes before 3 failures). Success activates the control panel. Failure results in two more orc drudges entering the room from a random tunnel (roll 1d6), and the character must start the skill challenge all over again. If Kalad is present, the character gains a +5 bonus to all checks related to the skill challenge.

Boiling Water: Once the control panel is activated, boiling water floods the chamber. At the start of each round, a steel door drops down over the lowest tunnel and the water level rises to cover that tunnel. After 6 rounds, the room is flooded enough that no more enemies join the fight. Creatures that fall into the water or start their turn in the water take 2d8 + 4 scalding (fire) damage.

Steam: Steam rises from the boiling water. Any characters above the water level, but below the next higher tunnel entrance, gain concealment.

Escape Hatch: A ladder near the control panel leads up 10 feet to a trapdoor set in the ceiling. The door opens easily. It can be sealed shut from the other side by depressing a button. Once sealed, the door can be opened by only pressing the button a second time, or by succeeding on a DC 37 Strength check.

Tusk, Orog Chieftain (T)	**Level 5 Elite Soldier**
Large natural humanoid	XP 400
Initiative +4	**Senses** Perception +3; low-light vision
HP 138; **Bloodied** 69	
AC 23; **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 16	
Saving Throws +2	
Speed 5	
Action Points 1	
Falchion (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
Reach 2; +12 vs. AC; 2d4 + 7 damage.	
Brutal Offensive (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
Requires falchion; +12 vs. AC; 2d4 + 7 damage, and Tusk can shift 1 and make a secondary attack. *Secondary Attack:* +12 vs. AC; 4d4 + 7 damage.	
Skull Harvest (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
Requires falchion; close burst 2; +12 vs. Reflex; 2d4 + 7 damage.	
Champion's Scorn (minor; at-will) ✦ **Fear, Healing**	
Close blast 5; one creature; the target becomes the object of the orog's scorn. Tusk's melee attacks deal an extra 2d4 damage to the target, and if he reduces the target to 0 hit points, he heals 34 hit points. Tusk can designate only one target as the object of its scorn at a time.	
Fearsome Leader (minor; at-will)	
Targets one orc or orog; the target gains a +2 bonus to its next attack roll before the end of Tusk's next turn.	
Alignment Chaotic evil	**Languages** Common, Giant
Skills Endurance +12, Intimidate +8	
Str 24 (+9)	**Dex** 15 (+4)	**Wis** 13 (+3)
Con 21 (+7)	**Int** 11 (+2)	**Cha** 12 (+3)
Equipment plate armor, falchion	

Myrissa, Shadar-Kai Dark Warlock (S) Level 2 Elite Skirmisher
Medium shadow humanoid XP 250

Initiative +3 **Senses** Perception +1; low-light vision
HP 74; **Bloodied** 37
AC 17; **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 16
Saving Throws +2
Speed 6
Action Points 1

⨺ **Dagger** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+6 vs. AC; 1d4 + 2 damage.

✧ **Spiteful Glamour** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Psychic**
Ranged 10; +7 vs. Will; 1d8 + 3 psychic damage, or 1d12 + 3 psychic damage against targets at full hit points.

✧ **Cursebite** (standard; encounter) ✦ **Necrotic**
Close burst 20; +7 vs. Fortitude; 2d8 + 3 necrotic damage; affects all creatures suffering from *warlock's curse*.

Warlock's Curse (minor; at-will, 1/round)
Closest enemy; Myrissa designates target as cursed. Her attacks deal an extra 1d6 damage. A target can have only one curse at a time.

Darkspiral Aura (free; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic, Psychic**
Whenever an enemy Myrissa has cursed is reduced to 0 hit points, she adds 1 point to her *darkspiral aura*. Once per round as a free action, when an enemy makes a melee or ranged attack against her, she can use her *darkspiral aura* to deal 1d6 necrotic and psychic damage per point in the aura and reset the aura to 0. If her aura deals at least 12 damage, she can reset the aura to 1 instead, but the attack deals half damage.

Shadow Jaunt (move; encounter) ✦ **Teleportation**
Myrissa teleports 3 squares and becomes insubstantial until the start of her next turn.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common
Skills Acrobatics +5, Bluff +9, Insight +6, Intimidate +9, Stealth +5
Str 10 (+1) **Dex** 14 (+3) **Wis** 11 (+1)
Con 13 (+2) **Int** 16 (+4) **Cha** 16 (+4)
Equipment leather armor, dagger, rod

7 Orc Drudges (D) Level 4 Minion
Medium natural humanoid XP 44 each

Initiative +0 **Senses** Perception +0; low-light vision
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.
AC 16; **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 12, **Will** 12
Speed 6 (8 while charging)

⨺ **Club** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+9 vs. AC; 5 damage.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common, Giant
Str 16 (+5) **Dex** 10 (+2) **Wis** 10 (+2)
Con 14 (+4) **Int** 8 (+1) **Cha** 9 (+1)
Equipment hide armor, club

2 Orog Militants (M) Level 3 Soldier
Medium natural humanoid XP 150 each

Initiative +3 **Senses** Perception +2; low-light vision
HP 48; **Bloodied** 24
AC 20; **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 13, **Will** 14; see also *discipline*
Speed 5

⨺ **Bastard Sword** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+10 vs. AC; 1d10 + 4 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the orog militant's next turn.

⨽ **Relentless** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Requires bastard sword; +10 vs. AC; 1d10 + 4 damage, and the target is pushed 1 square. The target is marked until the orog's next turn. The orog militant can shift into the vacated square as a free action.

⨽ **Fierce Counterstrike** (immediate reaction, when adjacent ally is first bloodied; encounter) ✦ **Weapon**
Requires bastard sword; +10 vs. AC; 2d10 + 4 damage, and the target is pushed 1 square. The orog militant can shift into the vacated square as a free action.

Discipline
Orogs gain a +2 bonus to saving throws against any ongoing effects when adjacent to an ally.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Giant
Str 19 (+5) **Dex** 10 (+1) **Wis** 13 (+2)
Con 16 (+4) **Int** 9 (+0) **Cha** 11 (+1)
Equipment plate armor, heavy shield, bastard sword

2 Orc Bolt Throwers (B) Level 1 Artillery
Medium natural humanoid XP 100 each

Initiative +2 **Senses** Perception +4; low-light vision
HP 26; **Bloodied** 13; see also *warrior's surge*
AC 13; **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 11
Speed 6 (8 while charging)

⨺ **Battleaxe** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+6 vs. AC; 1d10 + 3 damage

⨺ **Bellybow** (standard; at-will; recharges when the creature uses a move action to reload it) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 20/40; +8 vs. AC; 1d12 + 2 damage, and the target is pushed 1 square.

⨽ **Warrior's Surge** (standard, usable only while bloodied; encounter) ✦ **Healing**
The orc bolt thrower makes a melee basic attack and regains 6 hit points.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common, Giant
Skills Stealth +7
Str 14 (+2) **Dex** 15 (+2) **Wis** 9 (-1)
Con 14 (+2) **Int** 9 (-1) **Cha** 8 (-1)
Equipment leather armor, battleaxe, bellybow with 10 bolts

Appendix: Monsters

Orc

Orcs are a race of savage humanoids, hailing from some of the most desolate regions in the world. From the hardships of their lives as well as their ingrained love of slaughter, these vicious marauders boil out of the darkness to wage war against other races, plundering and killing until finally repulsed once more.

The *Monster Manual* includes a broad selection of orc monsters, representing a great many of the iconic orc adversaries player characters might face. The following entries expand on those by providing additional orcs, which are featured in this adventure.

Orc Bolt Thrower **Level 1 Artillery**
Medium natural humanoid XP 100

Initiative +2 **Senses** Perception +4; low-light vision
HP 26; **Bloodied** 13; see also *warrior's surge*
AC 13; **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 11
Speed 6 (8 while charging)

⊕ **Battleaxe** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+6 vs. AC; 1d10 + 3 damage.

Bellybow (standard; at-will; recharges when the creature uses a move action to reload it) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 20/40; +8 vs. AC; 1d12 + 2 damage, and the target is pushed 1 square.

Warrior's Surge (standard, usable only while bloodied; encounter) ✦ **Healing**
The orc bolt thrower makes a melee basic attack and regains 6 hit points.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common, Giant
Skills Stealth +7

Str 14 (+2)	**Dex** 15 (+2)	**Wis** 9 (-1)
Con 14 (+2)	**Int** 9 (-1)	**Cha** 8 (-1)

Equipment leather armor, battleaxe, bellybow with 10 bolts

Orc Bolt Thrower Tactics

The orc bolt thrower hangs back, lobbing bolts into the thick of its enemies. It draws its battleaxe and throws itself into combat if its enemies draw near.

Orc Bombardier **Level 1 Artillery**
Medium natural humanoid XP 100

Initiative +3 **Senses** Perception -2; low-light vision
HP 24; **Bloodied** 12; see also *warrior's surge*
AC 13; **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 11
Speed 6 (8 while charging)

⊕ **Battleaxe** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+5 vs. AC; 1d10 + 2 damage.

Warrior's Surge (standard, usable only while bloodied; encounter) ✦ **Healing, Weapon**
The orc bombardier makes a melee basic attack and regains 6 hit points.

Cinderbomb (standard; recharge ⚅ ⚅ ⚅) ✦ **Fire**
Area burst 2 within 10; +4 vs. Reflex; 1d8 + 3 fire damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends). On a crit, the orc bombardier knocks the target prone. *Miss:* Half damage, and no ongoing damage.

Detonation (no action, when reduced to 0 hit points; encounter) ✦ **Fire**
The orc bombardier must have at least one cinderbomb left; close burst 2; +4 vs. Reflex; 1d8 + 3 fire damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends) (crit knock prone). *Miss:* Half damage, and no ongoing damage.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common, Giant

Str 13 (+1)	**Dex** 17 (+3)	**Wis** 7 (-2)
Con 12 (+1)	**Int** 8 (-1)	**Cha** 9 (-1)

Equipment battleaxe, 3 cinderbombs, everburning torch

Orc Bombardier Tactics

The orc bombardier hurls cinderbombs at clumps of PCs, but it is not above catching a few drudges in the burst. Should enemies close to melee, it draws its battleaxe.

Orc Witch Doctor **Level 2 Controller**
Medium natural humanoid XP 125

Initiative +2 **Senses** Perception +3; low-light vision
HP 33; **Bloodied** 16
AC 15; **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 17
Speed 6 (8 while charging)

⊕ **Disgusting Claws** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Poison**
+7 vs. AC; 1d6 + 1 damage, and ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).

Curse of Gruumsh (standard; recharge ⚅ ⚅) ✦ **Acid**
Ranged 10; +6 vs. Fortitude; target is blinded (save ends), and the orc witch doctor makes a secondary attack. *Secondary Attack:* Close burst 1 centered on primary target; +6 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 4 acid damage, and ongoing 2 acid damage (save ends).

Unspeakable Filth (standard; at-will)
Ranged 5/10; +5 vs. Reflex; 1d4 + 4 damage, and the target takes -2 penalty to attack rolls until the end of the orc witch doctor's next turn.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common, Giant
Skills Arcana +6, Intimidate +10

Str 11 (+1)	**Dex** 12 (+2)	**Wis** 14 (+3)
Con 9 (+0)	**Int** 11 (+1)	**Cha** 18 (+5)

Equipment befouled rags, bone rod

Orc Witch Doctor Tactics

An orc witch doctor spits a curse at a divine character and hurls insults and filth, falling back to its claws if cornered.

Orc Freak	Level 2 Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid	XP 125
Initiative +5	**Senses** Perception +5; low-light vision
HP 38; **Bloodied** 19; see also *warrior's surge*	
AC 15; **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 11	
Speed 6 (8 while charging)	
(+) **Battleaxe** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+6 vs. AC; 1d10 + 3 damage.	
↓ **Savage Strike** (standard; encounter) ✦ **Weapon**	
Make two attacks; +6 vs. AC; 1d10 + 3 damage per attack. If both attacks hit the same target, the target also takes ongoing 5 damage (save ends).	
↓ **Warrior's Surge** (standard, usable only while bloodied; encounter) ✦ **Healing, Weapon**	
The orc freak makes a melee basic attack and regains 9 hit points.	
Alignment Chaotic evil	**Languages** Common, Giant
Skills Athletics +9	
Str 17 (+4)	**Dex** 15 (+3) **Wis** 8 (+0)
Con 14 (+3)	**Int** 8 (+0) **Cha** 7 (-1)
Equipment hide armor, 2 battleaxes	

Orc Freak Tactics

The orc freak is a savage and uncontrollable warrior who rushes headlong into danger no matter the odds.

Orc Scout	Level 3 Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid	XP 150
Initiative +5	**Senses** Perception +6; low-light vision
HP 46; **Bloodied** 23; see also *warrior's surge*	
AC 17; **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 13	
Speed 6 (8 while charging)	
(+) **Scimitar** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+8 vs. AC; 1d8 + 3 damage (crit: +1d8)	
(+) **Longbow** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
Ranged 20/40; +7 vs. AC; 1d10 + 2 damage.	
↓ **Warrior's Surge** (standard, usable only while bloodied; encounter) ✦ **Healing, Weapon**	
The orc scout makes a melee basic attack and regains 11 hit points.	
Overeager (immediate reaction, when the orc scout drops an enemy with a ranged attack; encounter)	
The orc scout draws its scimitar and charges the closest enemy.	
Alignment Chaotic evil	**Languages** Common, Giant
Skills Athletics +9, Endurance +8, Intimidate +5, Stealth +8	
Str 16 (+4)	**Dex** 15 (+3) **Wis** 10 (+1)
Con 14 (+3)	**Int** 8 (+0) **Cha** 9 (+0)
Equipment leather armor, scimitar, longbow with quiver of 20 arrows	

Orc Scout Tactics

An orc scout shoots arrows at its foes, but once it drops an enemy, its bloodlust gets the better of it, driving it to draw its scimitar and charge.

Orc Sergeant	Level 3 Soldier (Leader)
Medium natural humanoid	XP 150
Initiative +2	**Senses** Perception +5; low-light vision
Lead by Fear aura 1; orcs inside the aura gain a +1 power bonus to attack rolls.	
HP 46; **Bloodied** 23; see also *warrior's surge*	
AC 19; **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 13, **Will** 14	
Speed 6 (8 while charging)	
(+) **Glaive** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
Reach 2; +10 vs. AC; 2d4 + 4 damage.	
↓ **Warrior's Surge** (standard, usable only while bloodied; encounter) ✦ **Healing**	
The orc sergeant makes a melee basic attack and regains 11 hit points.	
Back to the Front! (immediate reaction, when orc ally within 5 squares is forcibly moved; at-will)	
Slide triggering ally 1 square.	
Alignment Chaotic evil	**Languages** Common, Giant
Skills Endurance +5, Intimidate +5	
Str 19 (+5)	**Dex** 9 (+0) **Wis** 13 (+2)
Con 14 (+3)	**Int** 11 (+1) **Cha** 11 (+1)
Equipment chainmail, glaive, tattered cloak	

Orc Sergeant Tactics

The orc sergeant commands other orcs, directing the combat from the second rank. It follows its soldiers into battle, taking advantage of its superior reach and the bodies between himself and his enemies. Should any ally think about retreating, the orc sergeant can command him back to the frontlines.

Orog

Hulking warriors with uncommon discipline and fighting expertise, orogs are the filthy offspring of orcs and ogres. Like half-elves, orogs breed true and are a separate race from orcs. Sometimes called greater orcs or ogrillons, orogs are a vastly superior breed, rising far above their lesser kin in terms of their mastery over weaponry and also their mastery of warfare. Where common orcs rely on superior numbers to overcome their enemies, orogs use clever

tactics and teamwork, ranking up in orderly lines of heavily armored soldiers.

Rumors tell of orog cities in the far-flung places in the world, though no one is certain where they are or what they might look like. Instead, orogs crop up wherever ogres and orcs congregate in large numbers. Orogs swiftly rise to the top and take over tribes, crushing their rivals until the rest of the horde surrenders to the orog's will.

Orog Militant **Level 3 Soldier**
Medium natural humanoid XP 150

Initiative +3 **Senses** Perception +2; low-light vision
HP 48; **Bloodied** 24
AC 20; **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 13, **Will** 14; see also *discipline*
Speed 5

⊕ **Bastard Sword** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+10 vs. AC; 1d10 + 4 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the orog militant's next turn.

↓ **Relentless** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Requires bastard sword; +10 vs. AC; 1d10 + 4 damage, and the target is pushed 1 square. The target is marked until the orog's next turn. The orog militant can shift into the vacated square as a free action.

↓ **Fierce Counterstrike** (immediate reaction, when adjacent ally is first bloodied; encounter) ✦ **Weapon**
Requires bastard sword; +10 vs. AC; 2d10 + 4 damage, and the target is pushed 1 square. The orog militant can shift into the vacated square as a free action.

Discipline
Orogs gain a +2 bonus to saving throws against any ongoing effects when adjacent to an ally.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Giant
Str 19 (+5) **Dex** 10 (+1) **Wis** 13 (+2)
Con 16 (+4) **Int** 9 (+0) **Cha** 11 (+1)
Equipment plate armor, heavy shield, bastard sword

Orog Militant Tactics

Orog militants fight best in close ranks to take advantage of their discipline and also the added protection afforded by their fellows. The orogs engage the closest enemy and drive it before them.

Orog Scarred Champion **Level 4 Brute**
Medium natural humanoid, orc XP 175

Initiative +2 **Senses** Perception +8; low-light vision
HP 66; **Bloodied** 33; see also *champion's scorn*
AC 17; **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 15
Speed 5

⊕ **Greatsword** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+10 vs. AC; 1d10 + 5 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the orog scarred champion's next turn.

⇖ **Winnowing Slash** (standard; recharge when first bloodied) ✦ **Weapon**
Requires greatsword; close burst 1; +7 vs. AC; 2d10 + 5 damage, and the target is pushed 1 square.

⇖ **Champion's Scorn** (minor; at-will) ✦ **Fear**
Close blast 5; one creature; the target becomes the object of the orog's scorn. The orog scarred champion's melee attacks deal an extra 1d10 damage to the target, and if the scarred champion reduces the target to 0 hit points, it regains 16 hit points.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common, Giant
Skills Intimidate +6
Str 20 (+7) **Dex** 10 (+2) **Wis** 12 (+3)
Con 16 (+5) **Int** 9 (+1) **Cha** 8 (+1)
Equipment plate armor, greataxe

Orog Scarred Champion Tactics

The orog scarred champion is a devolved form of orog—a brutish warrior driven mad by Gruumsh's dark will. The champion wades into the thick of battle, calling out challenges to its enemies and focusing its attacks against these foes until he slaughters them.

Orog Lore

A character knows the following information about orogs with a successful Nature check.

DC 15: Orogs are the spawn of orcs and ogres, and they somehow gain the better qualities of each without any of the drawbacks. A discipline and militant people, they raise up fortified encampments, where they form up their warriors into tight ranks and demand a level of cleanliness any commander could respect.

Troll

Trolls are one of the most diverse and unpredictable races in the world. Something about their nature causes them to adapt to their environments in unexpected ways, developing new abilities and losing ones less useful for feeding the bottomless pit that serves as their gullets. The following troll expands on those described in the *Monster Manual*.

Cave Troll **Level 7 Brute**
Large natural humanoid XP 300

Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +9; low-light vision
HP 99; **Bloodied** 49; see also *troll healing*
Regeneration 10 (if the cave troll takes acid or fire damage, regeneration does not function until the end of its next turn)
AC 19; **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 17
Speed 8

⊕ **Claw** (standard; at-will)
Reach 2; +10 vs. AC; 2d4 + 5 damage, and the target is grabbed (until escape). A cave troll can grab up to two targets at once.

↓ **Improvised Weapon** (standard; at-will)
Requires grabbed creature; reach 2; +10 vs. AC; 2d8 + 5 damage, and the grabbed creature takes half this damage and is dazed (save ends). When grabbing a creature wearing heavy armor, the cave troll deals +5 damage with this attack, but the grabbed creature is not dazed.

Troll Healing ✦ **Healing**
If the cave troll is reduced to 0 hit points by an attack that does not deal acid or fire damage, it rises on its next turn (as a move action) with 10 hit points.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Giant
Skills Athletics +13, Endurance +12
Str 21 (+8) **Dex** 16 (+6) **Wis** 12 (+4)
Con 19 (+7) **Int** 5 (+0) **Cha** 8 (+2)

Cave Troll Tactics

A cave troll is an unsubtle enemy. When it detects possible food, it leaps into battle, grabbing its foes with its long claws, and snatching them off their feet. The cave troll then tenderizes its meal, using its captured victim as a weapon, pounding the hapless victim into its allies until everyone and everything around the troll is dead.

Cave Troll Lore

A character knows the following information about cave trolls with a successful Nature check.

DC 15: Cave trolls are a nasty, spiteful breed of trolls, every bit as ravenous as their kin, but they take special pleasure in the destruction they wreak. Like their kin, cave trolls regenerate at an astonishing rate, which allows them to recoup from the nastiest of injuries. Their only weakness in this regard is when they are confronted with acid or fire—substances the cave troll rightly fears—for both can retard the troll's regenerative abilities and render it more vulnerable to its prey's attacks.

DC 20: Cave trolls collect in small tribal groups, and they prefer caves that open onto verdant forests or hills. The rarely venture too deep into the Underdark, for in the depths, food becomes far scarcer, and the cave trolls have a healthy respect for drow, mind flayers, and other peoples of the depths. Some races, particularly drow, orcs, and orogs, enslave cave trolls to use them as frontline soldiers. Cave trolls are not as powerful as ordinary trolls, and they are more tractable and are easier to train.

Encounter Groups

Cave trolls prefer the company of other cave trolls, but they might sometimes work with other trolls, ogres, and other monstrous races. Orogs, more than any other race, see the value of a tough cave troll, and when an orog dominates an orc tribe, there's bound to be a handful of cave trolls supporting the chieftain.

Level 7 Encounter (XP 1,500)

- 1 orc eye of Gruumsh (level 5 controller [leader])
- 2 cave trolls (level 7 brute)
- 4 orc berserkers (level 4 brute)

About the Author

Robert J. Schwalb works as a freelance designer for Wizards of the Coast and has contributed design to such books as *Tyrants of the Nine Hells* and *Elder Evils*, and the forthcoming Forgotten Realms *Player's Guide*, *Draconomicon: Chromatic Dragons*, *Manual of the Planes*, and *Demon Queen's Enclave*, as well as numerous articles for *D&D Insider*. Robert lives in Tennessee with his incredibly patient wife Stacee and his pride of chaotic evil werecats.

PARAGON
11–20

by Tim Hitchcock

In the Depths of Avarice

illustrations by Efrem Palacios, Jim Nelson, Wayne England, and Raven Mimura
cartography by Jeremy Simmons

THE BLACK-SHEEP son of prominent aristocrats, Valmour Tessount found himself written out of his father's will when his hedonistic behavior shamed his family once too often. In an uncharacteristically public display, the senior Tessount announced that he would bequeath his entire estate to Valmour's younger brother Sanoped. In response, Valmour pilfered a sizable cache of gems from the family vaults, took up the path of the warlord, and embarked on a life of debauchery and ill-fated adventures. Now, the prodigal son has a chance to restore his fortunes, but a deadly curse stands between him and the wealth he claims as his birthright.

"In the Depths of Avarice" is an adventure for 13th-level PCs.

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Adventure Background

When Valmour's father recently passed away, the estranged warlord returned to the family estate to pay his respects. Only then did he discover that the senior Tessount had left a small tract of land to his wayward son—the site of a failed copper mine now known as Tessount's Folly.

Late one evening, while inspecting the deeds of property, Valmour noticed that one of the documents had begun to peel apart with age. Within the layers of faded parchment, he discovered a map to a secret location hidden beneath the mine—the resting place of an ancient prophet whose tomb was said to be marked by a statue of solid gold.

Valmour's father was legendary for his avarice, and the son sadly inherited every bit of his father's greed. Ecstatic with his discovery, Valmour celebrated with a night of drinking and a hiring spree that saw him and half the men of the nearby villages head into the hills.

Valmour and his makeshift mining crew set up a suitable camp and began the process of opening up the long unused mine. For several weeks, work went smoothly. However, in his initial drunken revelry, Valmour let slip one too many references to the secret tomb he sought. These rumors reached the ear of a necromancer and alchemist named Eibon D'yingor—leader of a secret cult of Vecna. The dark rituals of the cult demanded a constant acquisition of relics of power—relics often found in tombs such as Valmour had spoken of. The next morning, Eibon and a number of cultists hired themselves to Valmour as mineworkers.

The following week, Valmour sent eight crews down to inspect the mine's deeper, more isolated shafts. By evening, Eibon's crew had failed to return. A rescue team under the leadership of Valmour's experienced crew chief Skahlton Gairg was sent into the mine to recover the missing men. By the time the sun rose, it was apparent that they, too, had gone missing. Though subsequent searches have been made, no trace has been found of either group.

Now, Valmour's workers grow wary. Fearing some dark horror lurking within the abandoned mine, many of them have taken their wages and fled. Running rapidly low on funds and desperate to locate his hidden fortune, Valmour seeks to hire adventurers to discover the fate of the missing workers, and to rid the mine of the unseen threat that claimed them.

Adventure Synopsis

When the PCs arrive at the mine, Valmour informs them of his dire situation and asks their aid in finding his missing workers. Though he professes his belief that they might have been caught in a cave-in or slain by stirges, the warlord-turned-prospector withholds his darkest suspicion—that his crew chief Skahlton Gairg has discovered the location of the golden statue, and that even now, he works to secure and steal it.

While Valmour is no stranger to combat, he fears that both mine crews are now under Gairg's command. Secretly, Valmour hopes that the PCs will find, confront, and dispose of the treacherous crew chief, allowing him to claim his golden prize. However, the truth behind why the miners went missing is far more complicated.

As the PCs enter the mine to talk to workers who were the last to see the missing work crew, the caverns are shaken by a mysterious explosion. After rescuing a trapped crew, the PCs are tipped that one of Eibon's followers is responsible, but by the time they catch up with their quarry, they find him already dead. The PCs must then face the creatures that killed him—horrifically transformed miners from Gairg's crew.

In the aftermath, the PCs discover a map leading to an unknown lower section of the mine. There, they find a terrified miner who reveals a harrowing tale of ancient magic that transformed his crew into monstrosities.

Descending into a deep chasm, the PCs face the undead creature spawned by Gairg before discovering an ancient ossuary protected by horrid skeletal guardians. In the middle of the ossuary stands the fabled golden statue. However, the tomb beneath the statue has had its ancient seal broken, a foul curse bestowed upon those who defile it.

An investigation of the tomb reveals that the prophet's skull has been removed, and that the potent curse can only be undone by restoring and resealing the tomb before it destroys all living creatures within the mine. The PCs must track down the thieves (Eibon and his cultists), now seeking a route to the surface even as the tomb's ancient guardians come to life.

At the same time, Valmour's impatience finally drives him into the mine after his golden prize. In the climax of the adventure, the prophet's curse transforms Valmour into an agent of vengeance—killing all those within the tomb to keep its secrets safe.

Preparing for Adventure

The scenario assumes that the PCs are in a town close to the mine, perhaps resting up after a previous adventure. Through an envoy, Valmour hires the party to solve the mystery of the disappearing miners.

If you don't want to have the PCs hired directly by Valmour, the following hooks can bring the party into the adventure.

Divine Emissary: The PCs have connections to a church or similar agency hard on the trail of a covert cult of Vecna. The PCs learn that several cultists have joined a small mining operation, but it isn't known how many are involved, or why. The PCs approach Valmour to offer their aid in finding his missing miners, but their primary goal is to discover what the cultists are up to.

Sibling Rivalry: Valmour's foppish brother Sanoped inherited the bulk of his father's estate, and he is curious as to his brother's sudden interest in what he believed was a worthless inheritance. After hearing that Valmour has lost miners, he hires the PCs to quietly investigate in the hope of discovering his shiftless brother's secret.

Deserters: The PCs encounter a group of miners who have fled Valmour's operations in fear. If you run this hook in a town, the miners are holed up in a cheap inn, drowning their fearful memories in drink and telling any who will listen about the horrors of Toussant's Folly (all imaginary).

If the PCs meet the miners on the road, they simply warn the party to turn back. If pressed for more information, they offer to trade their tale for a meal, then head off to seek safer work elsewhere.

The Quests

"In the Depths of Avarice" offers the PCs a chance to earn XP for a major and minor quest.

Major Quest—Restoring the Tomb
The PCs must retrieve the high prophet's skull (page 77), return it to the ossuary, then seal the tomb once more.

Reward: 3,000 XP and the cash promised by Valmour.

Minor Quest—The Miners' Fate
The fate of the missing miners (good or bad) is desperately awaited by their fellows aboveground. If the PCs ensure that Daigelus (area 10, page 63) makes it safely back to the surface to tell his tale, they earn a minor quest reward.

Reward: 700 XP.

Beyond the fact that two crews are missing, any information the miners offer should be suspect at best.

Starting the Adventure

The adventure begins when the PCs arrive at Tessount's Folly to meet with Valmour. The mine site is located at the end of a dirt trail leading up into the cliffs a few miles above the Aufeis River valley. The trail is decades old, but it bears the recent marks of ironclad wagon wheels and pack mule hooves. The path winds through forgotten apple orchards that slowly thin to low shrubs, the mossy dirt hardening to loose scree. In the shadow of the sweeping cliffs stands the weathered ruin of an abandoned mining town. On the outskirts, three dozen drab canvas tents mark the site of Valmour's camp. Behind the tents, the cliff face is rent by a wide timber-framed passage descending into darkness.

As soon as the PCs near the camp, two guards call out to them, asking their business and ushering them onto the grounds. Valmour appears shortly thereafter. Approaching the PCs with a stoic expression, he studies them carefully before offering a firm handshake. When introductions are finished, he invites the PCs into his tent to discuss the details of their employment.

An Insight check made against Valmour's Bluff (+9) allows the PCs to sense the prospector's well-composed fear. Under the current circumstances, Valmour trusts no one, especially vagabond adventurers looking to turn a quick coin. However, his situation is desperate, and the PCs are a logical—and expendable—investment

"I thank the gods you've come," Valmour says evenly. "Several days ago, I lost an entire crew in the lower mine, but have since found no trace of their fate. The rescue party that followed them vanished in the same way, with no sign found of attack or natural disaster. They are good men, most with families, and many of the other miners now refuse to enter the shafts for fear of what befell both crews. I need your help."

Valmour gives the PCs a crude map of the mine and tells them to meet with the members of two crews in the upper level (currently the only workers who will still enter the mine). Some of them were among the last people to see the first missing crew.

Valmour offers the PCs 4,000 gp for the job, though he stresses the difficulty of his current financial situation due to his recent troubles. A DC 21 Diplomacy check sees him up the offer to 5,000 gp. However, he only has funds to pay 2,000 gp up front, with the remainder (part of a desperate loan Valmour has taken from his brother) arriving in a week.

At this point, allow the PCs to make Insight checks against Valmour's Bluff check. A character who beats his check senses that his concern for his miners is genuine. However, if his check is beaten by 5 or more, the PCs also realize that his concern hides an ulterior motive. The PCs can attempt to gain more information, but not from the distrustful prospector.

Skill Challenge: The Mining Camp

As you wander the camp in preparation for your descent into the mine, you realize that Valmour's fear is symptomatic of the unease his workers feel—and that the prospector appears to know more than he lets on.

This skill challenge allows the PCs to gain further information by spending time in the mining camp as they prepare to investigate.

Setup: The PCs have had a long journey to the mine site, and they rest for a few hours while they make plans to enter the mine. During this time, they wander the camp, talking and listening to the frightened miners.

Level: 12

Complexity: 1 (requires 4 successes before 3 failures).

Primary Skills: Bluff, Diplomacy, Insight, Intimidate, Religion.

Bluff (DC 16): A PC can undercut Valmour's secrecy by hinting within the camp that the prospector knows more about the lost miners' fate than he lets on. The PC hears whispered rumors as a result. This check can be made any number of times, but after the first failed check, the DC increases to 21.

Diplomacy (DC 10): The PC candidly offers sympathy for the recent events at the mine, attempting to create a bond of trust with the remaining miners. Once a successful Diplomacy check is made, any subsequent Intimidate checks made in the challenge take a –2 penalty.

Insight (DC 10): In casual conversations with the miners, the PC picks up hints of the cult's presence within the camp.

Intimidate (DC 21): Instead of extending a hand of friendship to the miners, the PC attempts to unnerve or badger them. Once a successful Intimidate check is made, any subsequent Diplomacy checks made in the challenge take a –2 penalty.

Religion (DC 10): The PC hears of the missing miners' appearance, and is told of specific symbols adorning their clothes and skin. With a successful check, the PC recognizes the symbols as religious in nature, and associated with secrets and prophecy.

Secondary Skills: Arcana, Athletics.

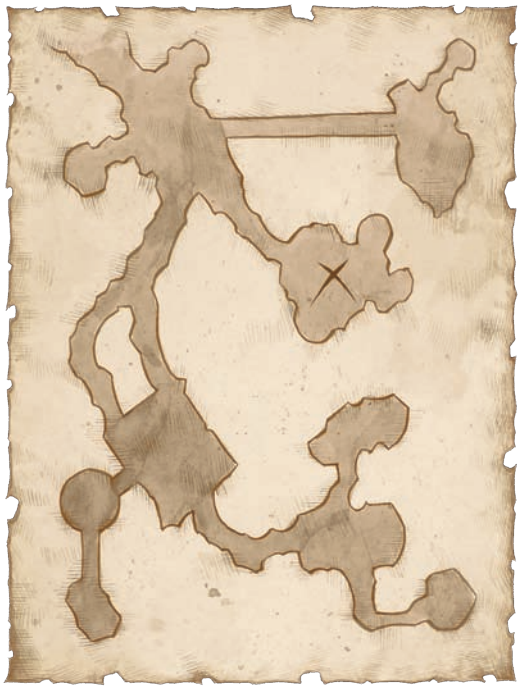
Arcana (DC 21): The PC demonstrates mystic knowledge and lore, inspiring confidence in the miners that the party can end the unseen threat. Using this skill doesn't count as a success or failure for the challenge, but the next Diplomacy or Insight check made in the challenge gains a +2 bonus.

Athletics (DC 21): The PC attempts to gain the respect of the miners with a social display of strength such as arm wrestling or helping with work around the camp. Using this skill doesn't count as a success or failure for the challenge, but the next Diplomacy or Insight check made in the challenge gains a +2 bonus.

Success: The PCs gain the miners' trust, revealing additional information.

The undercurrent of fear among the miners turns on suspicions not of monsters or magic in the mine, but foul play among the workers themselves. Though most of the workers know each other from the mining towns that dot this region, a number of recent hires were strangers who kept to themselves. A large number of these outsiders were among the groups that disappeared.

A few miners also speak of rumors that Valmour knows the mine contains something far more valuable than ore. Indeed, most of the work the miners have done so far seems to have less to do with seeking new veins than with exploration of the old caverns that failed when the mine was first built.



Failure: The PCs fail to gain the miners' trust, and must uncover the plot behind the disappearances as they investigate.

The Watcher

Though most of the cultists are among the missing miners, a single scout has remained in the camp as a spy. As the PCs engage the miners in the skill challenge, he watches closely. Shortly before the skill challenge ends, he slips away to head into the mine, intent on getting a message to Eibon warning that the PCs are coming.

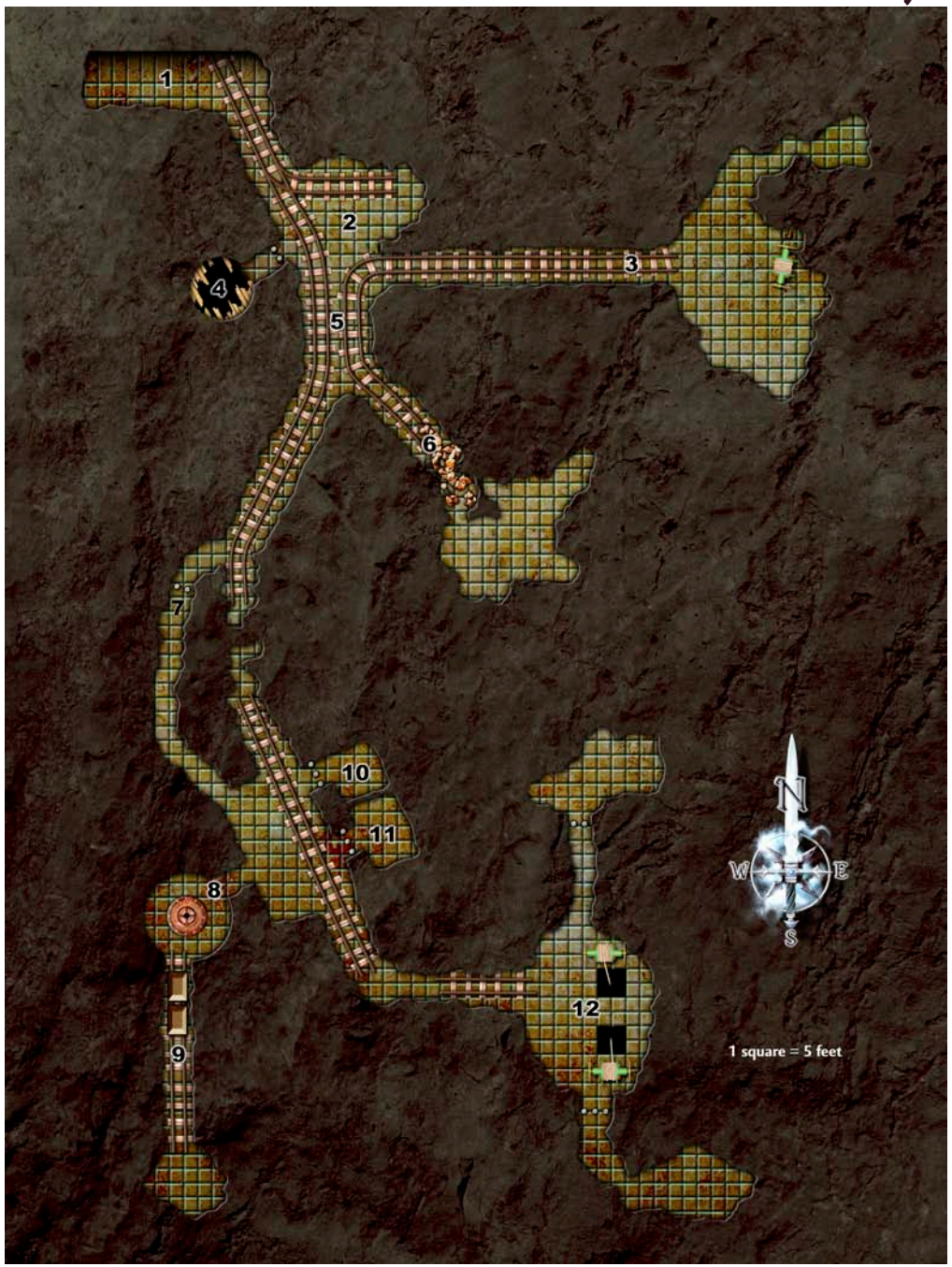
Eibon and his followers have set up alchemical explosives and triggers designed to collapse the shafts in case they are pursued. The spy moves one of those devices, hoping to trap the PCs in a cave-in when they seek out the crew currently working in area 6. However, the trap is accidentally activated by the miners shortly after the PCs enter the mine.

Features of the Mine

The rock within the upper mine is mostly black and grey gneiss streaked with thick glittering veins of quartzite and copper ore. In the spring, melting ice from the surrounding cliffs leaks into the passages, staining the floors with streaks of greenish-blue copper oxide. Most of the upper mineshafts are wide and square cut, supported with rough timber beams. Several shafts are laid with rusted but still serviceable mine cart rails.

The following features are common throughout the mine.

Illumination: None.



Iron Grates (I): Iron safety grates are installed throughout the mine to prevent injuries from collapses and falls. Top latches hold the grates closed, but they can be opened easily from either side.

Winches (W): Many sections of the mine feature passages too cramped, too steep, or too unstable to accommodate mine carts. Instead, ore is loaded into thick leather sacks fitted with iron clasps, then hauled up using winch-operated pulley lifts strung with coarse rope. The winches and rope have been recently installed, and can handle up to 5,000 pounds of weight. The Strength check necessary to winch an object or creature up or down is equal to 1 for every 50 pounds of weight lifted.

Signs: Hand-painted signs placed throughout the mine provide warnings and instructions for the miners working there. The major shafts are labeled with a single capital letter. Other signs mark open shafts, loose cables, unsafe track, dead ends, and stirge nests. Certain signs have been marked by the cultists, covertly indicating their route to the statue.

Tessount's Folly

1. The Entrance

The entrance to the mine is a 10-foot-by-10-foot shaft shored with rough timbers. The passage slopes gently downward, a set of iron tracks running along its center. The floor is slippery where recent rains have washed in through the entrance. Guide ropes run along spikes set into either wall.

Navigating the passage without the ropes requires a DC 12 Acrobatics check. A character who fails this check slides out of control down the shaft, crashing into a crate in area 2 and taking 1d6 damage.

2. Supply Room

This chamber stores supplies for the upper level.

This crude supply room is filled with blankets, oil, lanterns, rope, picks, shovels, mining helmets, goggles, work gloves, and six small casks of rock salt. Three shafts exit the room. Branded into the crossbeam above each shaft is a capital letter, running A, B, and C from east to west.

3. Mineshaft A

Twenty miners are working to restore this section, their repairs almost complete. When the PCs enter, the suspicious miners ask their business. They are visibly relieved when told that Valmour has hired the party to investigate the recent troubles, but their fear does not lessen.

If the PCs ask about the missing crews, one of the miners shakes his head.

"Gairg was as good a miner as they come. What happened to his rescue team, I don't know. That first bunch was green as new grass, though. City boys who ran out of regular work and figured they'd go underground. I figure they took a wrong turn down a deadfall shaft. Just a shame Gairg and his crew got lost looking for them."

If the explosion in mineshaft B occurs before the party comes here (see area 6), these miners panic and run for the surface. The PCs can find them (with a number of other miners from the camp) at area 1 thereafter.

4. The Drop

This passage ends abruptly at the entrance to a vertical shaft hastily boarded over. A posted sign reads: DEAD LIFT! 100 FT DROP! DO NOT ENTER!

The sign isn't kidding. Anyone foolish enough to descend the shaft (Athletics DC 25 to climb) finds that it leads to a large chamber filled with rusted equipment. Along the far wall, a huge hole opens up, leading to the lair of a purple worm that forced the abandonment of this section when the mine was first in operation. A poorly written warning chalked on the cave wall reads "BEEWAR! GIUNT PURPEL WURM!" Other passages trail out from the worm's lair, but these are beyond the scope of this adventure. (If the PCs insist on investigating, have them see signs that an elder purple worm occupies these caverns. This should be a sufficient deterrent to keep them out of this section of the mine.)

5. Marked Trail

The roof of the passage drops here. A sign reads: DANGER! LOW CEILING!

A DC 16 Perception check notes that the "C" on the sign has been marked with a subtle underline scratch. This marks the route Eibon and his cultists used to get to the ossuary. The PCs arrive here at the moment when the miners in area 6 accidentally trigger the alchemical explosives set by the cult spy.

Even as you look around, a sudden blast of sound echoes through the floor and walls. Loose stone spills from the ceiling as a heavy cloud of dust shoots out from mineshaft B.

6. A Timely Rescue

The second team that the PCs seek is trapped on the other side of a deadly mineshaft collapse.

Dust still fills the air where a fall of rocks and shattered timbers blocks the passage ahead.

Perception Check
DC 16: *From behind the pile of rubble, you hear voices calling for help.*
DC 21: *The aging timbers and the rubble around them show signs of having been burned and shattered, collapsing to bring the walls down. However, though the fall was severe, the structural integrity of the rock above and the remaining posts seems sound.*

The rock fall is safe to dig. It takes 1 hour for the PCs and the miners to pull away enough rock to open a passage that the trapped workers can squeeze through. During the excavation, one of the PCs notices a leather pouch with a torn strap at the edge of the rubble. The cultist spy lost it here as he fled when the miners spotted him.

Within the pouch are found mundane personal items, along with a poorly aged book detailing ancient theories of prophecy and divination. Within the book is tucked a note that reads:

"Our path is marked. Seek the signs. – E."

The note was written by Eibon, and refers to the signs the cultists have marked to show their route through the mine.

The rescued miners are grateful for the PCs' aid. In the aftermath, they tell of seeing one of their fellow miners prowling around the upper shaft just a few minutes before the explosion. (The cultist spy fled just before the approaching PCs would have seen him.) They describe the explosion that brought the timbers of the walls down, starting the collapse.

The miner they saw was one of the new hires who made up most of the missing eighth crew. These workers confirm the story of the crew in the A shaft, telling the PCs that the eighth crew were as aloof as they were inexperienced.

The miners want only to return to the surface, and leave as soon as the PCs have no more questions for them.

7. Collapsing Tunnel

While preparing to seize the mine, the cultists sabotaged several sections with alchemical explosives of Eibon's own design. With their support beams burned and blasted through, the walls and ceiling of a mineshaft collapse. The alchemical devices are triggered by an elaborate system of tripwires, set so that fleeing cultists can trigger them manually or activate them from a distance with mine carts.

The tripwires are labeled T on the area map. The collapse areas are marked C. Once the explosions are done, the tunnel is at no risk of further collapse (Perception DC 16), though Medium creatures must squeeze through the passage in the aftermath.

Collapsing Tunnel **Level 13 Lurker**
Trap XP 800

An alchemical explosion causes a tunnel to collapse.

Hazard: When triggered, the rock of the collapsing shaft fills the area with attacks.

Perception
- DC 18: The character sees a tripwire that activates the collapse.
- DC 23: The character notices tripwires running across the mine tracks, allowing them to be triggered by rolling a mine cart across them.

Initiative +3

Trigger
The trap is triggered when a creature or mine cart moves through the squares where the tripwire is laid. When triggered, the trap rolls initiative. Between the trigger and the attack, characters in the area know that the tunnel is collapsing. On its turn, the collapsing tunnel attacks a random square in the encounter area

Attack
Standard Action **Area** burst 2
Targets: All creatures in burst
Attack: +16 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d12 + 8 damage
Miss: Half damage
Effect: The burst area becomes difficult terrain.
Sustain Standard: The collapsing tunnel attacks each round until it has attacked every square in the area.

Countermeasures
- A character who makes a successful Athletics check (DC 5; DC 10 without a running start) can jump over the tripwire without triggering it.
- A character adjacent to the tripwire can delay the trap with a DC 18 Thievery check.
- A character adjacent to the tripwire can disable the trap with a DC 23 Thievery check.
- If an opponent attempts to trigger the trap with a mine cart, a character adjacent to the cart can attempt to stop or derail it with a DC 23 Strength check.
- A character who makes a successful DC 23 Dungeoneering check (a minor action) can determine the area the trap will attack on its next turn.

8. Dead Spy

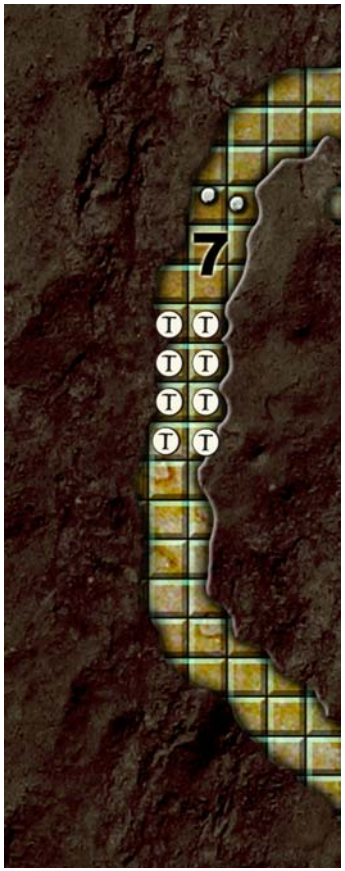
The PCs go deeper into the caverns to pursue the cult scout who collapsed the tunnel before them. When they find him, however, he is beyond interrogation.

Tactical Encounter: "Dead Spy" (page 69).

9. Stirge Nest

In the years since Tessount's Folly was abandoned, a colony of stirges has established itself in the depths. A sign above the tunnel entrance reads "DANGER."

Tactical Encounter: "Stirge Nest" (page 70).



10. The Sole Survivor

Hiding in the darkness here is Daigelus, a human miner who was the sole survivor of a ghastly massacre.

The tunnels here have fallen into dire disrepair, but tracks in the dust and rubble show where more than one person has recently passed this way.

Perception Check
DC 21: *A shaking figure cowers in a shadowy corner, eyes wide with fear.*

As soon as anyone spots Daigelus, he screams in fear and attempts to flee. If restrained, the terrified miner struggles desperately to free himself, bursting into pitiful threats and pleas for a merciful death. Daigelus can be calmed with a DC 20 Diplomacy check (DC 15 if a PC also offers him a drink for his nerves). If the PCs can calm him, the miner tells them he was a member of the rescue crew and recounts his harrowing tale:

"I was on crew with bossman Gairg when we was sent by Valmour to find lost miners. There was big chasm in the lower chambers, deep ones where the crawlies live. In the bottom, we found another passage with runes and skulls, bossman said it weren't on map. Then we came to room filled with bones. I started shaking. In the middle was huge gold demon, 20 feet tall at least and breathing smoke like dragon. Then something rose out of bones. There was screaming everywhere but I didn't look back. Ain't nobody got out but me."

Twisted Domination

Twisted domination is a malevolent curse used by the ancients to protect their tombs. Over the course of 1 hour, any creature afflicted with the curse is transformed into a twisted one—a hideous reflection of the creature's original form. The subject of the curse has its body warped and misshapen, with stringy muscle bending it into a simian stoop. Its cracked and callused yellow skin twitches unnaturally, as if unseen creatures were crawling beneath it. The eyes of a twisted one go black as it gains darkvision, and it can sense the direction and distance to the remains of the creature whose tomb it protects.

A twisted one's sole purpose is to defend a tomb and protect the remains interred there. The twisted ones in the mine believe that the master of the tomb hidden there—an ancient high prophet—is fated to one day rise as the herald of a glorious new age, and that his resting place must be protected at all costs. Once transformed, afflicted creatures attack any and all possible threats to the tomb, fighting any attempt to disturb their master's remains.

The curse can be negated with a Remove Affliction ritual or similar effects. Additionally, affected creatures in the mine return to normal once the high prophet's remains are returned and the tomb is sealed once more.

Player characters afflicted with twisted domination can attempt to counter the domination effect. This allows them to act independently, though they retain darkvision, the curse's horrid form, and the ability to sense the location and direction of the prophet's remains. A successful DC 21 Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma check stops the domination effect for 1 hour. After this time, the effect resurges unless another check is made.

Though twisted domination functions as a disease, it is a magical curse that affects even nonliving creatures.

Daigelus was a less than inspiring conversationalist even before the horror he witnessed. Fortunately, his desire to escape the mine means that he answers any questions he can if it means getting an escort out.

What brought Gairg down here? "Bossman was following a path he knew, like maybe he'd been there before. At least till we got to the chasms."

Where are these chasms? "Chasms is down the shaft lifts on the lower level, but they off limits 'cause of them crawlers."

What are the crawlers? "Crawlers is big worm things that sneak up and eat folks. They smart, hide all over lower mine."

What was the gold demon? "Weren't no real demon, but a great big gold statue. Bossman ran toward it, but there was the smoke."

What about the smoke? "Smoke had a funny smell. Everyone else sounded like they was choking but I didn't look. Just kept on running."

In addition, Daigelus can describe the location of the lift in area 12, though he will not accompany the PCs there. He tells the PCs, "We switched signs on them lifts so nobody follow us. One say it broken, but it ain't."

If Daigelus is escorted back to area 5, he makes his own way safely to the surface.

11. Dead End

The tracks end at a wooden mine cart bumper fitted with massive rusted springs. At the top of the shaft, a gear crank connects to a long chain fitted with a fist-sized hook for hauling full carts back up to the surface. A squat narrow passage leads to the west, a sign above it reading: BEWARE! FALLING RUBBLE!

A DC 16 Perception check notes that the last letter "E" on the sign has been carefully outlined with faint scratch marks. The marks are a clue left by the cultists to take shaft E.

A DC 22 Perception check notes that the sign covers a narrow alcove carved out of the rock. Hidden within the alcove are two small cases. One holds a strange collection of lenses (worth 1,000 gp), while the other holds dozens of small metal pieces that assemble into a mechanical device used for reading star patterns (worth 4,200 gp). Both these devices are Eibon's, stored here for safekeeping.

Twisted Domination — **Level 12 Disease**

The symptoms of cackle fever include high fever, disorientation, and frequent bouts of hideous laughter.

Wisdom check improve DC 16, stable DC 10, worsen DC 9 or lower

The target is freed from the curse.

◀ **Initial Effect** The target treats its allies as enemies for the purpose of making opportunity attacks. While within 1 mile of the tomb that is the source of the twisted domination, the target must make opportunity attacks against any creature except those also afflicted with twisted domination, or other guardians of the tomb.

◀▶ In addition to the initial effect, the creature must move immediately to within 1 mile of the tomb. The creature must stay within 1 mile of the tomb as long as the curse affects it.

▶ **Final State** In addition to prior effects, the creature is dominated and considers all creatures that are not guardians of the tomb its enemies. The creature takes hostile action against any such creatures that are within 1 mile of the tomb.

12. The Lift Shafts

The passage opens into another supply cavern. Wooden shelves hold simple metal tools for fixing carts, as well as a number of picks, candles, lanterns, ropes, and helmets. Several carts stand in one corner in various states of repair. Mineshafts exit from either end of the room, marked F and G.

Along the far wall, a pair of winch-operated pulley lifts are mounted over two 5-foot holes in the cavern floor. The lift shafts are labeled E and H. The lift on shaft E seems to be at the bottom of the shaft, and its rope is slack. A sign over shaft E reads: WARNING, NEEDS REPAIR. The lift at shaft H is at the top.

If the PCs didn't get Daigelus's warning, a DC 16 Perception check notes that the pulley above shaft H is damaged, while the pulley for shaft E is in good working order. If a character steps onto lift H, it gives way. The character must make a DC 21 Acrobatics check or follow the broken lift down to the bottom of the pit 50 feet below. The character takes 5d10 damage and ends up in area 13.

13. Loading Room

Ore was once loaded onto mine carts in this small chamber. As the PCs explore, they are attacked by a pack of deadly destrachan corrupted by the foul energy of the tomb.

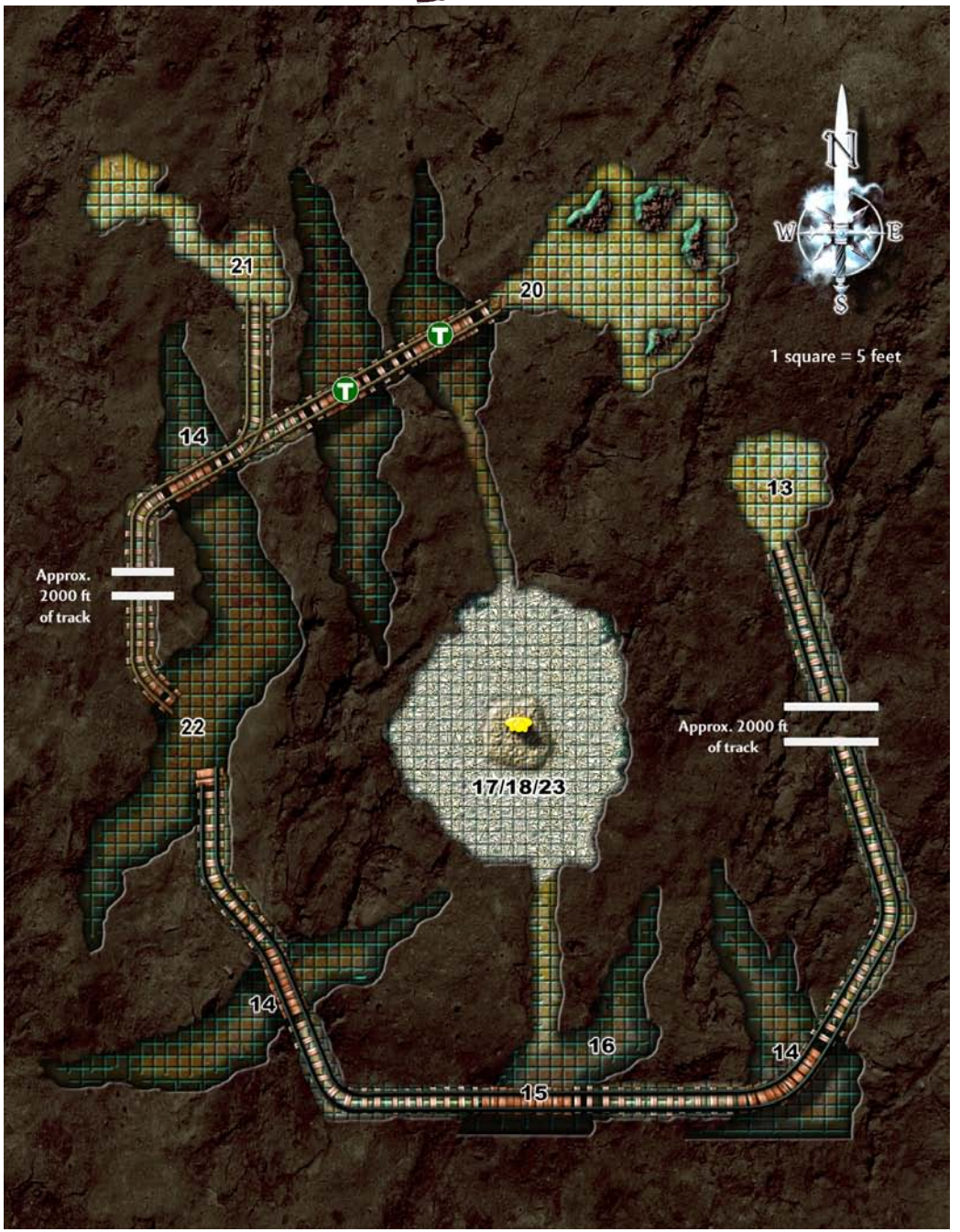
Tactical Encounter: "Loading Room" (page 71).

The shaft to the south of this area runs approximately 2,000 feet, twisting, dropping, and rising through the mines over the break indicated on the map.

14. The Chasms

A gaping chasm 40 feet deep opens up before you, the cart tracks crossing it on a series of wooden supports forming a rickety bridge. These are bound to thick pylons hammered into the cavern walls.

The miners avoid the chasms, as many are the hunting grounds of balhannoths (*Monster Manual*, page 24), the "crawlers" that Daigelus warned of. Characters delving into a chasm not marked as an encounter area have a 1 in 10 chance of encountering 1d4 hungry balhannoths.



15. The Descent

As the PCs enter this area, they see the cultists' ladder descending from the rail to drop 40 feet into the chasm. The ladder can be descended easily (a DC 5 Athletics check).

16. The Rescue Party

At the bottom of the chasm, the PCs make their way toward the ossuary. Skahlton Gairg and the rescue party, transformed to horrid undead, have a welcome prepared.

Tactical Encounter: "The Rescue Party" (page 72).

17. The Ossuary

This great chamber of bones holds the gold statue that Valmour seeks. However, the cultists have already been here, unsealing the tomb whose evil has tainted the mine.

Tactical Encounter: "The Ossuary" (page 73).

18. The Tomb of the High Prophet

The chamber beneath the golden statue is a 50-foot-deep, 20-foot-diameter glass cylinder—the high prophet's tomb. Descending without ropes or magic requires a DC 26 Athletics check.

The glass walls of the cylinder are faintly etched with hundreds of mystical runes. Beyond the glass is a wall of tightly packed bones, the charnel floor of the chamber above descending to a depth of 50 feet here. At the base of the cylinder floats a black iron sarcophagus, suspended upright by an unseen force. Beneath the sarcophagus, you see a small pile of ash and bones.

A DC 21 Arcana check reveals that the runes describe the power and wrath of a being called Oenamagros, the high prophet. Oenamagros died before he was able to reveal his greatest prophecy.

A DC 26 Arcana check reveals the full story:

Upon his death, Oenamagros's mage-priest servants bore his remains to a secret tomb, so that when the time of the new prophecy came, the high prophet could be called forth to speak the wisdom of the ages and open the way to the future. Using powerful rituals, his servants placed wards on his tomb that would curse any creature attempting to call forth the prophet before his time. In the end, Oenamagros would rise once again to complete his final prophecy and usher in a new age of wisdom.

When the PCs inspect the sarcophagus, read the following:

The perfectly symmetrical sarcophagus is cast to resemble three humans facing outward. Their arms are locked, bodies and heads meshed into a single being. The figure is garbed in strange robes and hundreds of metal rings. A crack along the side of the sarcophagus suggests that it can be opened.

The sarcophagus swings open at a touch, but there is nothing inside.

The pile of ash and bone on the floor is all that remains of the high prophet. The bones bear etchings similar to those on the glass walls of the tomb, and they are inlaid with silver. Though the remains appear to account for an entire skeleton, there is no sign of the prophet's skull anywhere in the chamber.

19. Corridor Guardians

A pair of cultists holds this passageway against the PCs, but they are not the only threat.

Tactical Encounter: "Corridor Guardians" (page 75).

The shaft beyond the encounter area runs approximately 2,000 feet over the break indicated on the map.

20. Sabotage

The passage opens into another deep chasm. The only apparent exit is by way of climbing the wall to the east and ascending 40 feet to the cavern above. There, you see cart tracks running southwest.

It takes a DC 18 Athletics check to scale the chasm walls up to the level of the tracks. The crumbling western face of the cavern cannot be climbed.

On the east side of the chasm is an abandoned dig site spread with rusted iron bars and abandoned machinery. The cart tracks here have not been used in years, though they appear sturdy enough.

A DC 5 Acrobatics check (DC 15 if running) allows a character to move along the tracks without falling. However, after fleeing this way, the cultists sabotaged two sections of trap (marked "T" on the map) with alchemical acid.

Any Perception check made from the cavern reveals that the tracks are safe. Only a Perception check made within 5 feet of a section of sabotaged track can detect the trap. Each trap is detected and triggered separately.

Collapsing Tracks **Level 9 Warder**
Trap XP 400

The tracks of the mine carts loom over the black chasm below.

Trap: Though the track here appears trustworthy, it has been sabotaged to make characters walking along it drop through and fall into the depths.

Perception

- **DC 21** A character within 5 feet of a section of sabotaged track catches sight of where alchemical acid has eaten away at the metal bindings of the track supports.

Trigger

The trap attacks when a creature enters its square.

Attack

Immediate Reaction **Melee**
Targets: All creatures within 5 feet
Attack: +14 vs. Reflex
Hit: The target slips through the collapsing rails and falls to the bottom of the chasm, taking 4d10 damage and falling prone.
Miss: The target manages to hang onto the tracks and can clamber to safety on either side of the break.

Countermeasures

- Before the trap is triggered, a character can use the rusted iron bars in the cavern to shore up a section of damaged track with a DC 22 Dungeoneering check.
- A character who makes a successful Athletics check (DC 12 or DC 22 without a running start) can jump over a section of sabotaged track without triggering it, or can jump across a section of track that has already collapsed. A DC 5 Acrobatics check (DC 18 if running) allows a character to move along the tracks without falling.
- Characters on either side of a section of collapsed track can lash a rope across the gap with a pair of DC 21 Athletics checks. A character can then climb across the gap with a DC 12 Athletics check.

21. Last Stand

The PCs find themselves caught between the surviving cultists (fleeing with the high prophet's skull) and the twisted ones seeking its return.

Tactical Encounter: "Last Stand" (page 77).

22. Broken Track

The section of track that once bridged this chasm has collapsed. Descending and ascending the chasm walls requires two DC 18 Athletics checks.

23. Return to the Prophet's Tomb

The PCs attempt to return the skull to the tomb and undo the evil corrupting the mine. However, Valmour has followed the party down from the surface and fallen victim to the tomb's dark curse.

Tactical Encounter: "Return to the Prophet's Tomb" (page 80).

Concluding the Adventure

Once the PCs defeat Valmour and his servants, they can restore the high prophet's skull and other remains to the sarcophagus and reseal the chamber. This successfully lifts the curse and restores any surviving twisted ones to their original form. If Valmour survives his ordeal and is returned to normalcy, he orders the mine closed and sealed. In any event, the remaining miners return to their homes, leaving Tessount's Folly behind.

Dead Spy

Encounter Level 12 (3,500 XP)

Setup

5 twisted one pickfighters (P)

Within a disused ore crusher, the PCs find the cult spy responsible for collapsing the tunnel. However, the dead scout is actually being used as bait by the foul creatures that lurk here—five twisted ones, formerly members of Skahlton Gairg's rescue crew.

Perception Check, as the PCs approach
DC 5: *An agonizing scream echoes from somewhere ahead, then abruptly goes silent.*

The characters approach to find blood spread across the tunnel floor. The blood trail continues around a corner and into another passageway. A sign above reads: CAUTION!

When the PCs can see into this area, read:

Cart rails circle the perimeter of this round chamber, exiting out two shafts—one labeled "C"; the other, "D." In the center of the room sits a great iron crusher wheel attached to an ore hopper. The wooden gears that once drove it have all but rotted away. Atop the wheel, the crumpled form of a human male is drenched with blood.

Perception Check
DC 22: *In the shadows along the wall, you see the skulking forms of several hunched and deformed humanoids. Their meaty fists clutch crude miners' picks.*

5 Twisted One Pickfighters (P) Level 12 Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 700

Initiative +10 **Senses** Perception +12; darkvision
HP 118; **Bloodied** 59; see also *curse carrier*
AC 26; **Fortitude** 24, **Reflex** 26, **Will** 22
Speed 6

(+) **Pickaxe** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+17 vs. AC; 2d8 + 5 damage.

Curse Carrier (when reduced to 0 hit points) ✦ **Charm, Polymorph**
Close burst 1; +15 vs. Will; the target is cursed with twisted domination (page 64).

Careful Weave (move; at-will)
An adjacent enemy slides into the twisted miner's space, and the twisted miner shifts 2 squares.

Sense Master
A twisted one can sense the distance and direction of the creature or remains whose tomb it is driven to guard.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common
Skills Dungeoneering + 12, Stealth +13
Str 17 (+9) **Dex** 21 (+11) **Wis** 13 (+7)
Con 14 (+8) **Int** 12 (+7) **Cha** 7 (+4)
Equipment pickaxe

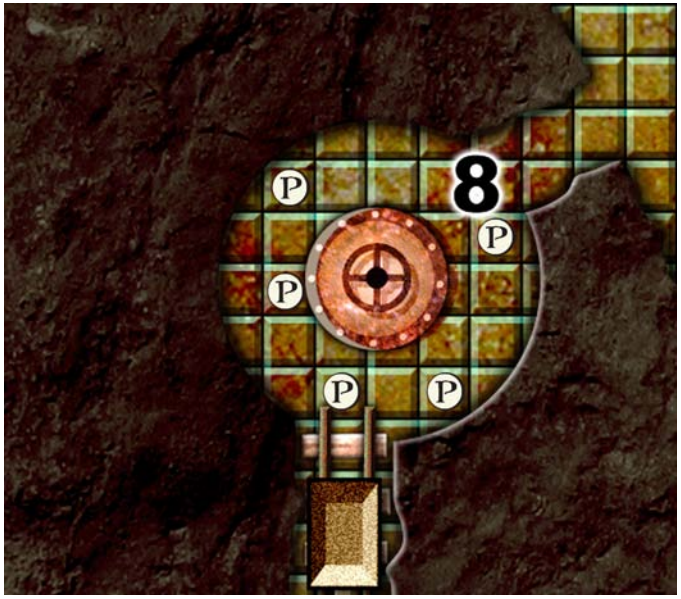
Tactics

The twisted ones wait for the PCs to enter the room in an attempt to surround them and block their escape. They make pickaxe attacks as they speak in halting tones, shouting that all defilers must be destroyed in the name of the high prophet. The twisted ones fight to the death, spreading their foul curse even as they fall.

Development

The sound of combat in this area puts the stirges in area 9 on alert.

PCs inspecting the bodies of the twisted ones can make a DC 16 Arcana or Heal check to determine that these are humans under the affect of a dark curse. A DC 16 Perception check indicates that these



creatures were normal miners before they were transformed.

One of the twisted ones bears a map showing a section of the mine not on the map Valmour gave the PCs—the deeper tunnels where Valmour believed the tomb might be found. A DC 21 Perception check indicates that both maps were drawn by the same hand (Valmour's), confirming that the prospector has been less than forthright with the party. The map shows a section of the mine where the cart tracks cross the chasms.

Treasure

The dead cultist spy wears an elaborate platinum holy symbol of Vecna worth 2,000 gp, and carries a jeweled dagger worth 500 gp.

Stirge Nest

Encounter Level 10 (2,400 XP)

Setup

This set of tracks descends 50 feet down a steep shaft that ends in a 20-foot-wide cavern. A mine cart lies on its side at the bottom of the tracks. The miners have been in no hurry to explore this area or to clear out the stirges that inhabit it.

1 dire stirge (D)
3 stirge swarms (S)

The dire stirge lurks 30 feet from the entrance to area 8, but it has full concealment behind an outcropping of rock until a PC passes beneath it.

Perception Check, when a PC passes beneath the dire stirge
DC 21: *Clinging to the rock above you is a horrid batlike creature with four wings and a long stinging beak.*

When the first PC reaches the halfway point of the mineshaft, read:

A strange buzzing rises from the end of the tunnel. From out of the shadows comes an immense swarm of flying creatures with four batlike wings.

The dire stirge attempts to stay in hiding until the stirge swarms engage the PCs. Do not place its miniature unless it is spotted or until it attacks.

Dire Stirge (D) **Level 7 Lurker**
Small natural beast XP 300
Initiative +10 **Senses** Perception +3; darkvision
HP 60; **Bloodied** 30
AC 21; **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 16; see also *bite*
Speed 2, fly 6 (hover)
⨁ **Bite** (standard; at-will)
+12 vs. AC; 1d6 damage, and the target is grabbed (until escape) and takes ongoing 10 damage until it escapes. An dire stirge doesn't make attack rolls while grabbing a target and gains a +5 bonus to its AC and Reflex defenses.
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Skills Stealth +11
Str 10 (+3) **Dex** 16 (+6) **Wis** 10 (+3)
Con 12 (+4) **Int** 1 (-2) **Cha** 4 (+0)

3 Stirge Swarms (S) **Level 12 Brute**
Medium natural beast (swarm) XP 700
Initiative +9 **Senses** Perception +6; darkvision
Swarm Attack aura 1; the stirge swarm makes a basic attack as a free action against each enemy that begins its turn in the aura.
HP 141; **Bloodied** 70
AC 24; **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 23
Resist half damage from melee and ranged attacks; **Vulnerable** 10 against close and area attacks
Speed 2, fly 6 (hover)
⨁ **Bloodsucking Swarm** (standard; at-will)
+15 vs. AC; 2d6 + 4 damage, and ongoing 5 damage (save ends).
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Skills Stealth +14
Str 8 (+5) **Dex** 16 (+9) **Wis** 10 (+6)
Con 11 (+6) **Int** 1 (+1) **Cha** 4 (+3)

Tactics

The dire stirge targets a lightly armored PC and grabs to feed. The stirge swarms surround that same PC, making *swarm attacks* against characters attempting to attack the dire stirge. If the PCs flee this area, the stirges follow into area 8 but will not pass beyond that point.

Treasure

At the bottom of the shaft is the mummified corpse of an adventurer killed here years before. His rotting leather backpack contains 440 pp.

Loading Room

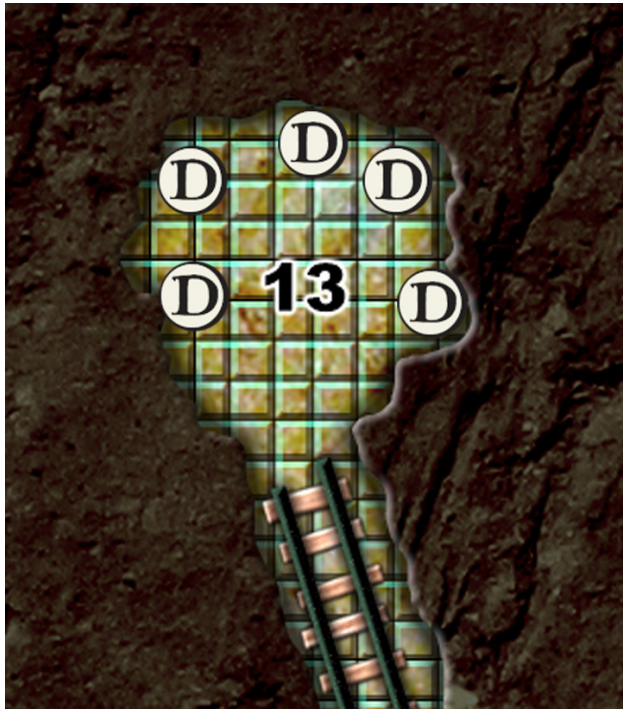
Encounter Level 12 (3,300 XP)

Setup

5 twisted destrachans (D)

The shaft ends in a loading chamber containing four mine carts, a few pickaxes, and an empty ore bin. To the south, tracks lead into a dark tunnel marked with a sign bearing the letter "J."

Perception Check, if a PC investigates the sign
DC 10: The letter "J" on the sign has been underlined with 2 distinct scratch marks.



The sign is a clue left by the cultists to take the shaft to the second chasm.

A few minutes after the PCs enter the room, their presence attracts the attention of a pack of destrachan warped by the curse of the tomb.

When the destrachan appear, read:

From the shadows to the south, five eyeless creatures race shrieking toward you, their limbs and spines twisted and bent.

If the PCs make a successful Dungeoneering check to recognize the destrachan (or if the party has faced these creatures before), they recognize that their forms have been warped by some unnatural power.

5 Twisted Destrachans (D)	**Level 10 Artillery**
Large aberrant magical beast (blind)	XP 500
Initiative +9	**Senses** Perception +12; blindsight 10
HP 86; **Bloodied** 43; see also *curse carrier*	
AC 23; **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 21	
Immune gaze	
Resist 10 thunder	
Speed 6, climb 3	
⊕ **Claw** (standard; at-will)	
+15 vs. AC; 1d8 + 4 damage.	
↛ **Sound Pulse** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Thunder**	
Range 10; +14 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 5 thunder damage.	
↛ **Bellowing Blast** (standard; recharge ⚅) ✦ **Thunder**	
Close blast 5; +14 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 5 thunder damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).	
↛ **Curse Carrier** (when reduced to 0 hit points) ✦ **Charm, Polymorph**	
Close burst 1; +13 vs. Will; the target is cursed with twisted domination (page 64).	
Sense Master	
A twisted one can sense the distance and direction of the creature or remains whose tomb it is driven to guard.	
Alignment Evil	**Languages** Deep Speech
Skills Bluff +10, Stealth +14	
Str 18 (+9)	**Dex** 18 (+9) **Wis** 14 (+7)
Con 20 (+10)	**Int** 7 (+3) **Cha** 10 (+5)

Cave-In Hazard	**Level 13 Lurker** XP 800
The destrachans' sonic attacks set off a chain-reaction collapse in the cavern.	
Hazard: When triggered, rocks and debris fall from above to fill the area with attacks. It attacks a different part of the area each turn, on its initiative.	
Perception	
✦ DC 26: After one of the destrachans misses with its *sound pulse* attack, a successful Perception check notes that the attack has cracked and weakened the cavern walls.	
Initiative +6	
Trigger	
The cave-in is triggered the third time any destrachan misses with its *sound pulse* attack. Between the trigger and the cave-in's attack, characters in the area know that a cave-in is beginning. On its turn, the cave-in attacks a random square within the encounter area.	
Attack	
Standard Action	**Close** burst 1
Targets: All creatures in burst	
Attack: +16 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 2d12 + 8 damage.	
Miss: Half damage.	
Effect: The burst area becomes difficult terrain.	
Sustain Standard: The cave-in attacks each round, targeting a different square.	
Countermeasure	
✦ A character who makes a DC 31 Dungeoneering check as a minor action can determine the square the trap will attack on its next turn.	

Tactics

The twisted destrachans attack at range with *sound pulse* for as long as possible, using *bellowing blast* only if surrounded. Their blindsight gives them a warning of any impending cave-in, allowing them to avoid areas about to collapse. These creatures are driven to protect the tomb, and they fight until slain.

The Rescue Party

Encounter Level 11 (XP 2,800)

Setup

Gairg, slaughter wight (S)
2 miner battle wights (B)

On the floor of the chasm leading to the ossuary, the party is set upon by former crew chief Skahlton Gairg and two miners from the rescue party. Killed by the bone nagas, the three were subsequently raised as horrid undead by the necromancer Eibon. They now defend this area against all intruders.

When the PCs cross the chasm floor read:

To the south, the chasm continues on into darkness. To the north, a boardwalk of rough wooden planks leads to an open passageway, shattered wood littering the ground where the entrance was once sealed. Walls of smooth stone run north, a sharp contrast to the rough rock of the rest of the mine.

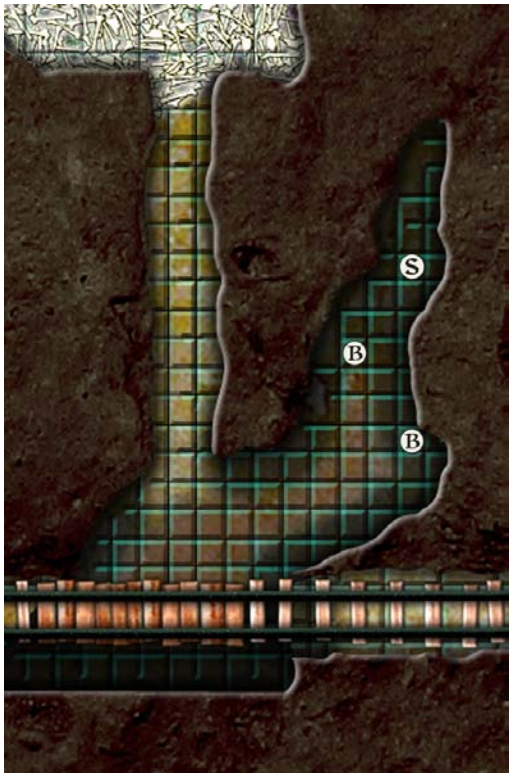
Suddenly, a roar comes from out of the shadows as three shrieking wights race toward you.

Tactics

Gairg and the battle wights attack as soon as the first PC comes down the ladder from area 15, focusing on that target for as long as it takes the rest of the party to descend. Gairg makes claw attacks against the strongest-looking melee combatants while the battle wights focus on more lightly armored foes. If a battle wight immobilizes a PC with its *souldraining pickaxe*, it follows up with *soul reaping*. All the wights fight until destroyed.

Gairg, Slaughter Wight (S) **Level 18 Brute**
Medium natural humanoid (undead) XP 2,000
Initiative +14 **Senses** Perception +13; darkvision
HP 182; **Bloodied** 91; see also *death wail*
AC 30; **Fortitude** 30, **Reflex** 27, **Will** 26
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 20 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 10 radiant
Speed 7
(+) **Claw** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Healing, Necrotic**
+21 vs. AC; 3d6 + 8 necrotic damage, the target loses 1 healing surge and is weakened (save ends), and the slaughter wight regains 15 hit points.
Death Wail (when reduced to 0 hit points) ✦ **Necrotic**
Close burst 5; targets enemies; +21 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 4 necrotic damage. Undead allies in the burst can make a basic attack as a free action.
Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common
Str 26 (+17) **Dex** 20 (+14) **Wis** 9 (+8)
Con 22 (+15) **Int** 12 (+10) **Cha** 18 (+13)

2 Miner Battle Wights (B) **Level 9 Soldier**
Medium natural humanoid (undead) XP 400
Initiative +7 **Senses** Perception +3; darkvision
HP 98; **Bloodied** 49
AC 25; **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 22
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 5 radiant
Speed 5
(+) **Souldraining Pickaxe** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic, Weapon**
+15 vs. AC; 1d8 + 5 damage, and the target loses 1 healing surge and is immobilized (save ends).
Soul Reaping (standard; recharge ⚅) ✦ **Healing, Necrotic**
Ranged 5; affects an immobilized target only; +12 vs. Fortitude; 2d8 + 5 necrotic damage, and the battle wight regains 10 hit points.
Alignment Evil **Languages** Common
Skills Intimidate +14
Str 20 (+9) **Dex** 13 (+5) **Wis** 9 (+3)
Con 18 (+8) **Int** 12 (+5) **Cha** 20 (+9)
Equipment pickaxe



Treasure

A search of Gairg's body in the aftermath of combat finds a wallet embossed with his name. Within the wallet are a *potion of vitality* and ten fire opals worth 300 gp each.

The Ossuary

Encounter Level 13 (4,300 XP)

Setup

2 bone naga guardians (N)
3 skeletal tomb guardians (S)

When the PCs can see into this area, read:

The straight-walled tunnel opens into a huge cavern whose floor is a macabre carpet of bones. What must be the skeletal remains of thousands of creatures are strewn from wall to wall, piled so thickly that there is no sign of the real floor beneath them.

In the center of the chamber rises a jet-black pedestal. On it stands a huge golden statue of a hideous demon, hunched and stooped. Gold chains as thick as a human wrist truss the statue to the outer cavern walls by its hands and feet, while a fifth gilded chain binds the creature to the pedestal floor by the throat. The expression on its face seems broken and defeated. Thin coils of sulfuric smoke vent from its nostrils and lips.

The bone nagas and the skeletons start the encounter deep within the field of bones. Do not place their miniatures unless they are spotted or until they attack.

When a PC comes within three squares of one of the creatures in the ossuary or passes the point marked 'X' on the map, read:

A blast of bone shards erupts all around you as five skeletal monstrosities burst up from the floor across the cavern. Two are coiled like bone snakes but have human skulls for heads, their empty eye sockets burning with pale green flame. The other three are skeletal humanoid figures with four arms, each bearing a gleaming scimitar.

Tactics

The bone nagas strike hard and fast, alternating between bite attacks to weaken targets and *death sway* to daze PCs attempting to keep their distance. Once a target is dazed, a bone naga continues with *death sway* attacks for as long as the foe remains so.

The skeletal tomb guardians stay in the midst of melee to maximize the effect of their *sudden strike* and make *cascade of steel* attacks as often as possible. If the PCs spread out, they choose lightly armored targets for *twin scimitar strike* attacks.

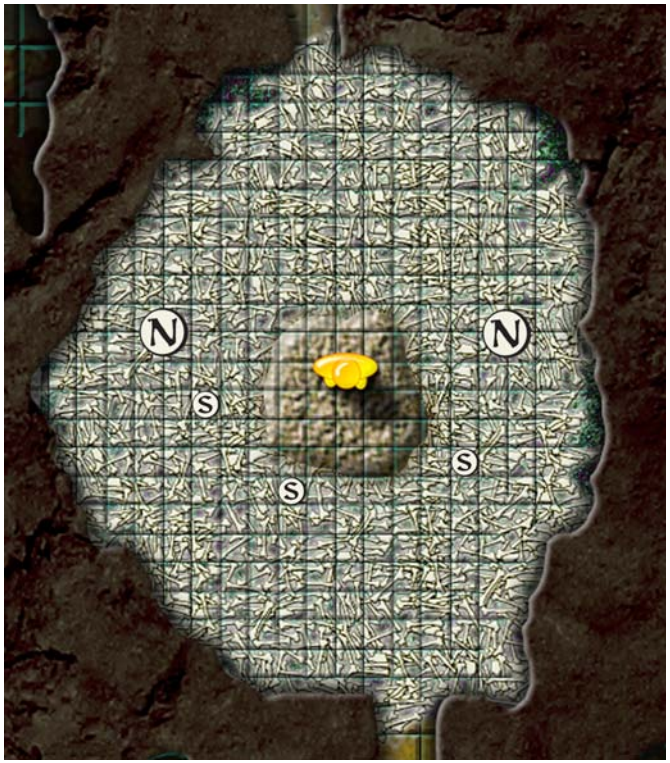
The creatures here fight within the area of the shallow pitfalls whenever possible, hindering the PCs' melee attacks. They know the locations of the deeper pitfalls scattered throughout the chamber, and move back after attacking in an attempt to lead a PC into these areas.

These guardians of the tomb fight until destroyed.

Development

When the guardians of the chamber have been dealt with, the PCs can approach the golden statue that protects the tomb of the high prophet. When the cultists stole the prophet's skull, they unwittingly triggered a series of dark and powerful curses. Now a potent flesh-warping power threatens to corrupt would-be thieves and desecrators of the tomb. Any creature coming within 10 feet of the statue risks inhaling its noxious fumes. See the "Twisted Domination" sidebar on page 64 for more information.

The statue's neck chain connects to a great disc of stone set into the floor. The stone is slightly askew, revealing a dark pit beneath. Around the lip of the capstone, ancient runes flare with a dull purple light.



The runes can be read with a DC 21 Arcana check:

Woe to those who seek to call forth the Prophet before the time of reckoning, for they bring upon the world a plague of curses. None shall find peace until the Prophet sleeps.

Beneath the capstone, a glass-walled cylindrical passage leads down to the tomb of the high prophet (see area 19 on page 67).

2 Bone Naga Guardians (N) Level 12 Elite Controller
Large immortal magical beast (undead) XP 1,400

Initiative +8 **Senses** Perception +15; darkvision
Death Rattle (Necrotic) aura 2; enemies that start their turns in the aura are dazed.
HP 256; **Bloodied** 128
AC 28; **Fortitude** 28, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 25
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 10 radiant
Saving Throws +2
Speed 7; burrow 7 (bone floor only)
Action Points 1

⊕ **Bite** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**
Reach 2; +16 vs. AC; 2d4 + 4 damage, and ongoing 5 necrotic damage (save ends). *Aftereffect:* The target is weakened (save ends).

✧ **Death Sway** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**
Close burst 3; blind creatures are immune; +17 vs. Will; the target is dazed (save ends). If the target is already dazed, it takes 2d6 + 4 necrotic damage instead.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Draconic, Supernal
Skills Arcana +15, History +15, Insight +15, Religion +15
Str 20 (+11) **Dex** 14 (+8) **Wis** 18 (+10)
Con 24 (+13) **Int** 18 (+10) **Cha** 20 (+11)

3 Skeletal Tomb Guardians (S) Level 10 Brute
Medium natural animate (undead) XP 500

Initiative +10 **Senses** Perception +12; darkvision
HP 126; **Bloodied** 63
AC 23; **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 20
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 5 radiant
Speed 8

⊕ **Twin Scimitar Strike** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
The skeletal tomb guardian makes two scimitar attacks against the same target: +13 vs. AC; 1d8 + 4 damage (crit 1d8 + 12). This also holds true for opportunity attacks.

⸸ **Cascade of Steel** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
The skeletal tomb guardian makes two *twin scimitar strike* attacks (four scimitar attacks total).

⸸ **Sudden Strike** (immediate reaction, when an adjacent enemy shifts; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
The skeletal tomb guardian makes a melee basic attack against the enemy.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Str 18 (+9) **Dex** 20 (+10) **Wis** 14 (+7)
Con 16 (+8) **Int** 3 (+1) **Cha** 3 (+1)
Equipment 4 scimitars

Treasure

This chamber has seen the demise of many explorers over the years. Any search of the area reveals the remains of rusted armor and mundane weapons. A DC 16 Perception check made to search around the pedestal uncovers a +3 *pact blade falchion*.

Features of the Area

Bone Floor: Bones cover the ossuary floor to a minimum depth of 1 foot. All areas within the chamber are difficult terrain.

In addition, the floor drops down in places, creating deeper pits of bone that can trap creatures attempting to move through them. These pits are marked on the map according to their depth (5 feet or 10 feet). A creature must make a DC 16 Acrobatics or Athletics check to enter the area of a bone pit. On a failed check, the creature's movement is halted for that round. A creature halted in the area of a 5-foot-deep bone pit sinks to its knees and takes a –2 penalty to attack rolls and defenses until its next move. A character in the area of a 10-foot-deep bone pit sinks to the waist and takes a –4 penalty to attack rolls and defenses until its next move.

As a minor action, a character can make a DC 21 Dungeoneering or Perception check to determine the location and depth of any bone pits in squares adjacent to him.

The bone nagas and skeletal guardians are unaffected by these effects, and can move across the bone floor at normal speed. Additionally, the bone nagas can move beneath the floor using their burrow speed.

Demon Statue: Though this huge idol appears to be solid gold at first glance, a DC 21 Perception check reveals it to be bronze covered in gold leaf. Attempting to strip the gold leaf automatically infects a creature with twisted domination.

Northern Door: Set into the north wall of the chamber is an 8-foot-diameter round door of black iron. Though the door is closed, charring around its frame suggests that it was once protected by a magic seal that has been recently broken.

Corridor Guardians

Encounter Level 12 (3,500 XP)

Setup

2 cultist thugs (C)
2 boneclaw guardians (B)
4 flameskulls (F)

To cover his escape, Eibon left behind a pair of cultists to guard the tunnel north of the ossuary against whatever might try to follow. Halfway down the passage, the cultists have sheltered behind a crude bunker and choked the hallway with the corpses of former cultists transformed into twisted ones. They wait in a panicked state of alertness. As soon as they spot movement in the corridor, they open fire.

However, the real danger in this encounter lurks behind the fanatics. In the fifth round after the PCs enter combat, the high prophet's curse awakes guardians sealed for centuries in the corridor walls. These horrid undead burst out from within secret alcoves to slay any living creatures they encounter. The flameskulls emerge 4 squares behind the cultists' starting position from either wall, while the boneclaws emerge from the earth beneath the bones in the ossuary, behind the characters.

The undead guardians start the encounter out of sight. Do not place their miniatures unless they are spotted or until they attack.

When the PCs enter from area 18, read:

A long natural stone passage opens up ahead, blocked halfway by a makeshift bunker of bones and rubble. Two human males in miners' garb poke their heads up from behind cover to fire arrows.

At the beginning of the 5th round of combat, read:

A heavy grinding suddenly echoes through the passageway. Behind the archers, the walls open up as two hulking creatures emerge from hidden alcoves. Their elongated claws reach for the terrified humans as four burning skulls rise to the air behind them.

2 Cultist Thugs (C)	**Level 8 Skirmisher**
Medium natural humanoid, human	XP 350
Initiative +10 **Senses** Perception +9	
HP 87; **Bloodied** 43	
AC 22; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 19	
Speed 6	
Short Sword (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+13 vs. AC; 2d6 + 2 damage.	
Shortbow (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
Ranged 15/30; +13 vs. AC; 1d8 + 3 damage.	
Deft Strike (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
The cultist thug shifts up to 2 squares and then makes a short sword attack; +13 vs. AC; 2d6 + 2 damage.	
Combat Advantage	
The cultist thug deals an extra 2d6 damage on melee attacks against any target it has combat advantage against.	
Dark Boon (minor, usable only while bloodied; encounter) ✦ **Healing**	
For as long as it is bloodied, the cultist thug gains regeneration 4.	
Alignment Evil **Languages** Common	
Skills Acrobatics +13, Athletics +12, Bluff +10	
Str 16 (+7) **Dex** 18 (+8) **Wis** 11 (+4)	
Con 15 (+6) **Int** 12 (+5) **Cha** 12 (+5)	
Equipment leather armor, short sword, shortbow, quiver of 30 arrows	

Tactics

The cultists are dedicated to guarding this passage, but they pretend to accept an offer of truce from the PCs in order to draw them closer. They use their bows

unless the first PC closes to melee range before the undead appear, in which case they draw swords and fight from behind the cover of the bunker. When the undead attack, the cultists are killed immediately. Award a percentage of the cultists' total XP according to how much damage the PCs managed to deal to them beforehand.

The flameskulls take 1 round to destroy the two cultists, then they lob *fireballs* through the bunker toward the PCs. Thereafter, they focus on *flame ray* attacks, staying out of melee for as long as possible.

While the flameskulls kill the cultists, the boneclaws use their terrible reach to try and pin the PCs in the narrow passageway. Whether the PCs remain in the passageway, retreat to the ossuary, or

advance to the northern chasm, the boneclaws stay in the thick of combat to maximize their *relentless opportunist* attacks.

These guardians pursue the PCs into any other areas of the mine. They fight until destroyed.

Features of the Area

Bunker: This low wall of bones and rubble provides cover. Climbing over the bunker costs 1 extra square of movement.

Bodies: The bodies of cultists transformed into twisted ones litter the passageway, all killed by arrows. Squares containing bodies are difficult terrain.

A DC 16 Perception check made to search the bodies of the twisted ones or the thugs reveals that they all have a brand at their chest marking them as cultists of Vecna.

Alcoves: The hidden alcoves in which the undead were stationed are draped with rotting shrouds and other funeral trappings (see "Treasure," below). A DC 16 Religion check indicates that the boneclaws and the flameskulls were created from the remains of great warriors interred alive to guard the tomb.

4 Flameskulls (F) **Level 8 Artillery**
Tiny natural animate (undead) XP 350

Initiative +7 **Senses** Perception +11
HP 70; **Bloodied** 35
Regeneration 5
AC 21; **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 21
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 fire, 5 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 5 radiant
Speed fly 10 (hover)

⊕ **Fiery Bite** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Fire**
Reach 0; +10 vs. AC; 1 damage plus 1d8 fire damage.

Flame Ray (standard; at-will) ✦ **Fire**
Ranged 10; +12 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 6 fire damage.

Fireball (standard; encounter) ✦ **Fire**
Area burst 3 within 20; +12 vs. Reflex; 3d6 + 6 fire damage. *Miss:* Half damage. The flameskull can exclude two allies from the effect.

Mage Hand (minor; at-will) ✦ **Conjuration**
As the wizard power *mage hand* (*PH* 158).

Illumination
The flameskull sheds bright light out to 5 squares, but it can reduce its brightness to dim light out to 2 squares as a free action.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Infernal
Skills Stealth +12
Str 5 (+1) **Dex** 16 (+7) **Wis** 14 (+6)
Con 16 (+7) **Int** 22 (+10) **Cha** 20 (+9)

2 Boneclaw Guardians (B) **Level 12 Soldier**
Large shadow animate (undead) XP 700

Initiative +15 **Senses** Perception +12; darkvision
HP 120; **Bloodied** 60; see also *necrotic pulse*
AC 28; **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 25, **Will** 23
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 5 radiant
Speed 8

⊕ **Claw** (standard; at-will)
Reach 3; +18 vs. AC; 1d12 + 5 damage

Necrotic Pulse (free, when first bloodied; encounter) ✦ **Healing, Necrotic**
Close burst 10; undead allies in the burst regain 10 hit points, and enemies in the burst take 10 necrotic damage.

Relentless Opportunist
If the boneclaw hits with an opportunity attack, it can make another opportunity attack against the same target during the current turn.

Threatening Reach
The boneclaw can make opportunity attacks against all enemies within its reach (3 squares).

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common
Skills Intimidate +14, Stealth +16
Str 15 (+8) **Dex** 21 (+11) **Wis** 10 (+6)
Con 14 (+8) **Int** 10 (+6) **Cha** 16 (+9)

Treasure

A DC 21 Perception check made to search the alcoves uncovers a wealth of treasure buried with the dead. The PCs can claim three gold necklaces worth 1,500 gp each, six rings set with fire opals (500 gp each), three gem-studded bracelets (700 gp each), and a +3 *rod of reaving*.

Last Stand

Encounter Level 14 (4,925 XP)

Setup

Eibon D'yingor (E)
3 cultist warlocks (W)
2 twisted one pickfighters (P)
5 twisted one minions (M)

This area suffered a recent collapse. Rubble now blocks an exit that once led to the northwest.

The cart track runs north to end in a rubble-strewn cavern. Though there is no sign of any recent mining operations here, numerous tracks can be seen in the dust of the floor.

Perception Check, as the PCs approach the northwest cavern.
DC 16: *From the darkness ahead comes a guttural howling and the sound of scraping stone.*

Eibon and his surviving cultists are pinned down in these caverns by a pack of twisted ones. The necromancer has stolen the high prophet's skull, the twisted ones howling as they tear at the rubble wall in an attempt to get it back.

When the PCs can see into this area, read:

A wall of rubble blocks the passage ahead, aging mine machinery crushed beneath it. Before the wall, misshapen creatures claw at the stones, howling as they try to tear their way through. At intervals, pulses of black light flare at holes in the rubble wall, knocking the twisted ones back. Someone is behind the rubble, and fighting for their lives.

Medium creatures can squeeze through the spaces in the rubble, but the warlocks have those points defended. Both sides are in a stalemate until the PCs arrive. As soon as the twisted ones are aware of the party's presence, they attack.

Tactics

The twisted ones focus their initial attention on the PCs. The pickfighters take on the strongest-looking melee combatants, while the minions flank for combat advantage and to limit the PCs' movement.

Eibon and his warlocks squeeze through the rubble in the third round. The necromancer sizes up the situation immediately, shouting out that he and his force will aid the PCs (Bluff +14). Eibon and the warlocks make melee basic attacks against the twisted ones for 1 round. They then turn their attacks against the PCs.

Eibon uses his *tendrils of death* against spellcasters and ranged combatants, laying into melee combatants with mace attacks.

Eibon D'yingor (E)	**Level 13 Elite Controller (Leader)**
Medium natural humanoid, human	1,600 XP
Initiative +7	**Senses** Perception +11
Necrotic Bonds aura 5; an enemy in the aura suffering from ongoing necrotic damage is immobilized.	
AC 29; **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 25, **Will** 28	
HP 248; **Bloodied** 124	
Saving Throws +2	
Speed 6	
Action Points 1	
Mace (standard; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic, Weapon** +17 vs. AC; 1d8 + 3 damage, and ongoing 5 necrotic damage (save ends).	
Tendrils of Death (standard; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic** Ranged 10; two targets; the first target must be within 10 squares of Eibon, and the second target within 5 squares of the first target; +17 vs. Fortitude; the target takes ongoing 10 necrotic damage (save ends).	
Stolen Knowledge (standard; recharge ⚅) ✦ **Psychic** Area burst 2 within 10; targets enemies; +18 vs. Will; 2d6 + 5 psychic damage, and the target can't use daily or encounter powers (save ends).	
Bloodcut Armor (minor; while bloodied; daily) Eibon gains resist 10 to all damage until the end of his next turn.	
Fatal Rally (minor; encounter) Allies within 5 squares of Eibon can make a melee basic attack against an enemy within reach.	
Alignment Evil	**Languages** Common
Skills Arcana +14, Bluff +14, History +14, Religion +14	
Str 12 (+7)	**Dex** 13 (+7) **Wis** 21 (+11)
Con 12 (+7)	**Int** 17 (+9) **Cha** 16 (+9)
Equipment *+3 bloodcut leather armor*, light shield, *+2 mace*, *potion of vitality*, holy symbol of Vecna	

The cultist warlocks stay out of melee range to use *desiccating curse*, then follow up with *scour the cursed* to maximize damage.

The twisted ones and the cultists all target the more powerful PCs, though the twisted ones focus their attacks on Eibon (still carrying the high prophet's skull) if he moves more than 10 squares away from the closest PC.

The twisted ones fight to the death. The cultists fight as long as they can hold their own against the party, but when the first warlock falls, Eibon and the others flee.

3 Cultist Warlocks (W) **Level 8 Artillery**
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 350

Initiative +5 **Senses** Perception +9
AC 20; **Fortitude** +18, **Reflex** +20, **Will** +22
HP 63; **Bloodied** 31
Speed 6

⊕ **Fell Touch** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Fear, Psychic**
+13 vs. Reflex; 1d8 + 4 psychic damage, and the target is pushed 2 squares.

⊕ **Desiccating Curse** (standard; at-will)
Ranged 10; +13 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 3 damage, and the target takes a –2 penalty to all defenses (save ends).

Scour the Cursed (standard; at-will)
Ranged 10; +13 vs. Will; 2d6 + 3 damage, and if the target is subject to the penalties of *desiccating curse*, it takes an extra 2d6 damage.

Inescapable Hex (immediate reaction, when an enemy within sight succeeds on a saving throw; at-will)
The triggering creature must reroll the saving throw, using the second result.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common
Skills Arcana +11, Bluff +12, History +11
Str 12 (+5) **Dex** 12 (+5) **Wis** 11 (+4)
Con 13 (+5) **Int** 14 (+6) **Cha** 16 (+7)
Equipment leather armor

2 Twisted One Pickfighters (P) **Level 12 Skirmisher**
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 700

Initiative +10 **Senses** Perception +12; darkvision
HP 118; **Bloodied** 59; see also *curse carrier*
AC 26; **Fortitude** 24, **Reflex** 26, **Will** 22
Speed 6

⊕ **Pickaxe** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+17 vs. AC; 2d8 + 5 damage.

Curse Carrier (when reduced to 0 hit points) ✦ **Charm, Polymorph**
Close burst 1; +15 vs. Will; the target is cursed with twisted domination (page 64).

Careful Weave (move; at-will)
An adjacent enemy slides into the twisted miner's space, and the twisted miner shifts 2 squares.

Sense Master
A twisted one can sense the distance and direction of the creature or remains whose tomb it is driven to guard.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common
Skills Dungeoneering + 12, Stealth +13
Str 17 (+9) **Dex** 21 (+11) **Wis** 13 (+7)
Con 14 (+8) **Int** 12 (+7) **Cha** 7 (+4)
Equipment pickaxe

5 Twisted One Minions (M) **Level 12 Minion**
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 175

Initiative +10 **Senses** Perception +12; darkvision
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion; see also *curse carrier*
AC 26; **Fortitude** 24, **Reflex** 26, **Will** 22
Speed 6

⊕ **Claw** (standard; at-will)
+16 vs. AC; 5 damage.

Curse Carrier (when reduced to 0 hit points) ✦ **Charm, Polymorph**
Close burst 1; +14 vs. Will; the target is cursed with twisted domination (page 64).

Sense Master
A twisted one can sense the distance and direction of the creature or remains whose tomb it is driven to guard.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common
Str 17 (+9) **Dex** 21 (+11) **Wis** 13 (+7)
Con 14 (+8) **Int** 12 (+7) **Cha** 7 (+4)

Mine Cart Chase

At their first opportunity to get past the PCs, the cultists grab a mine cart and push off down the passageway. From there, they careen down the mineshaft to the south, hoping to lose the PCs before having to bail out at area 22.

There are plenty of carts left for the PCs to follow in. Each is 5 feet wide and 10 feet long, and can hold up to three characters. Characters in a cart can move past each other and are not considered to be squeezing for the purpose of combat. Each cart carries an alchemical lamp that provides bright light in a 5-square radius. The cultist's cart starts 10 squares ahead of the PCs' first cart. The PCs' carts start out 5 squares apart.

The break on the map covers approximately 400 squares (2,000 feet) of twisting mineshaft as it crosses numerous chasms. The mine cart chase is a combat in which the PCs and the cultists are stationary in their carts relative to each other, while the terrain moves past them at the cart's double-move speed of 50 squares per round. This gives the party 8 rounds of high-speed mine cart combat.

Each round, a character in each cart must make a DC 16 Dexterity check (a minor action) to keep the cart under control. No other characters can aid them on this check. On a failed check, the cart's speed slows by 5 squares for that round. That is, if a PC fails the check, his or her cart moves 5 squares back from the cultists. If the cultists fail the check, the PCs' carts advance 5 squares toward them. If all checks are successes or failures, the carts stay where they are relative to each other.

On a failed control check result of 9 or less (or on a roll of 1), one character in the cart (determined randomly) must make a DC 10 Acrobatics or Athletics

check or be tossed out of the cart. Characters who fall from a cart take damage according to the terrain they are passing through at the time, and are effectively out of combat as the carts speed away.

Passing Terrain

At the beginning of each round, roll 1d6 to determine the terrain flashing past the runaway carts.

1d6	Check Track Terrain	Ranged Attack Penalty	Falling Penalty	Damage
1-2	Straight passage	+0	+0	1d10
3	Curved passage	-2	-2	1d10
4	Plunging passage	-4	-2	2d10
5	Open chasm	+0	+0	6d10
6	Curved chasm	-2	-2	6d10

The terrain affects the check made to avoid being thrown from a cart, imposes a penalty on ranged attack rolls, and determines the damage taken by a character who falls from a cart.

Close Carts

Carts that meet because one's movement is slower crash into each other, but this has no effect on combat or the check to avoid being thrown from a cart. Terrain imposes no penalty on melee attack rolls if two carts are close enough. If two carts meet, a character can jump from one to the other with a DC 10 Athletics check. Carts that come together move apart again depending on the results of control checks in the next round. However, a character with a rope can lash two carts together as a standard action.

Sudden Stop

At the end of the eighth round of the chase, the broken tracks at area 22 loom ahead. One PC in each cart must make a DC 21 Strength check to pull the brakes and stop. One other character can aid the check. If the check fails, the cart plunges over and into the chasm, but all PCs can make DC 16 Acrobatics checks to bail out before the end. On a successful check, a PC takes only 1d10 damage from the jump. On a failed check, the PC goes over the edge and takes 6d10 damage from the fall to the chasm floor below. (Eibon makes the check with a +9 modifier to keep his cart from plunging over the gap. If he fails, all the cultists go over and take 6d10 damage.)

Development

In the aftermath of combat, a DC 10 Perception check notes that Eibon's cloak conceals a dark steel case wrapped in a leather shroud. The case is inscribed with funerary runes that can be translated with a DC 16 Arcana or Religion check. They explain the cult's ongoing search for magical relics and Eibon's plans to use the prophet's skull as part of a dark ritual. The high prophet's skull lies within the case.

A journal that Eibon carries contains notes detailing his mostly accurate theories of how the tomb's curse functions. Use this to provide the PCs with the information in the "Twisted Domination" sidebar on page 64.

Treasure

Eibon and his cultists carry a total of 250 pp between them. Eibon also wears +3 *bloodcut* leather armor and carries a *potion of vitality*.

Return to the Prophet's Tomb

Encounter Level 14 (5,000 XP)

Setup

8 twisted shardmasters (S)
1 twisted foulmaw (F)
2 twisted hulks (H)
Valmour, twisted one (V)

When the PCs make their way back to the ossuary to return the high prophet's skull to the tomb, they interrupt Valmour and a crew of miners attempting to claim the statue.

This encounter takes place in the ossuary. Place Valmour in the sea of bones near the base of the golden statue and place the remaining figures around him.

When the PCs return to the ossuary following the recovery of the high prophet's skull, read:

As you approach the ossuary, you are surprised to hear voices from ahead. Drawing close, you see figures hard at work around the statue. Valmour and a group of miners have managed to unhook the statue from its golden chains and are in the process of toppling it.

But before you can interrupt, Valmour suddenly screams. Wreathed in the acrid smoke vented from the statue's mouth, his skin begins to blister and boil. His bones warp as first he, then the others, are transformed into twisted ones by the power of the tomb's dark curse.

It takes 2 rounds for Valmour and his crew to undergo their hideous transformation.

When the transformation is done, read:

Eight of the miners emerge from the smoke with bone spurs jutting through their misshapen flesh. One has grotesque distended jaws and clutches a staff made of its own bones. Two have transformed to creatures of ogrelike proportions, muscle writhing beneath their skin. Valmour's misshapen body is wreathed in the glow of purple lightning as he suddenly wheels toward you. With a shriek, he and the others attack.

Tactics

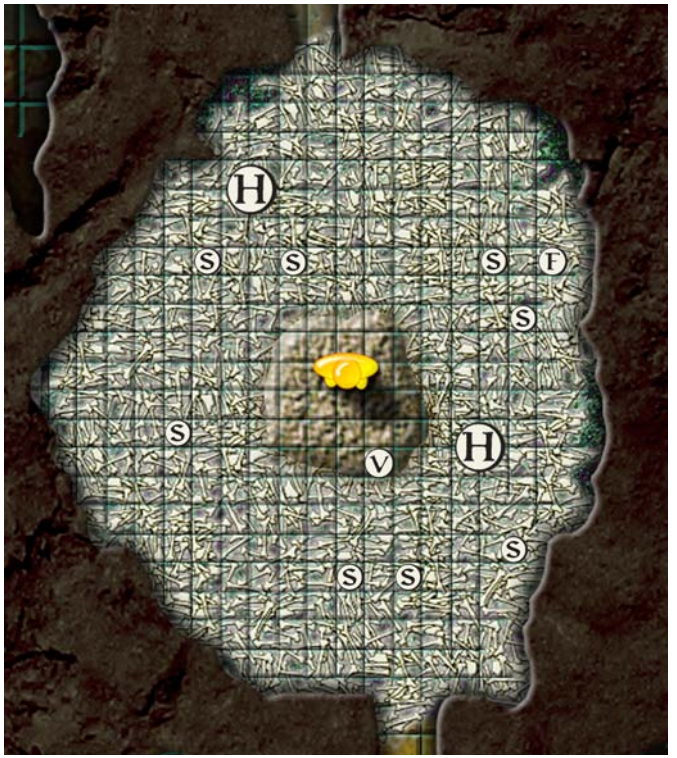
The twisted shardmasters circle the statue, making *bone shard* attacks against the closest PCs.

The twisted hulks wade into melee against the strongest-looking combatant, focusing *clobber* attacks on a single target in order to quickly bloody a PC and use their *bestow curse*.

The twisted foulmaw targets foes at range with *disrupting orb*, reserving its *corrupt breath* attacks until it is pressed by more than one foe.

Valmour uses his claws to mark a foe and follow up with an *enemy of the tomb* attack. He stays in the thick of combat, trusting his *arc of lighting* to harry foes who press him in melee.

Even if the PCs give up the skull, the creatures here are in the grip of a dark bloodlust. Though they can be knocked unconscious if the PCs want to spare them (whereupon they return to normal when the tomb is resealed), they otherwise fight to the death.



8 Twisted Shardmasters (S)		**Level 10 Minion**
Medium natural humanoid, human		XP 125
Initiative +9	**Senses** Perception +10; darkvision	
AC 25; **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 20		
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion; see also *curse carrier*		
Speed 7		
Bone Shard (standard; at-will)		
Ranged 5/10; +15 vs. AC; 10 damage.		
Curse Carrier (when reduced to 0 hit points) ✦ **Charm, Polymorph**		
Close burst 1; +12 vs. Will; the target is cursed with twisted domination (page 64).		
Sense Master		
A twisted one can sense the distance and direction of the creature or remains whose tomb it is driven to guard.		
Alignment Evil	**Languages** Common	
Skills Athletics +11, Stealth +14		
Str 13 (+6)	**Dex** 18 (+9)	**Wis** 11 (+5)
Con 14 (+7)	**Int** 10 (+5)	**Cha** 7 (+3)

Returning the Skull

The PCs must return the prophet's remains (including the skull) to the sarcophagus and close the capstone to end the curse. However, whether they do so before or after the threat of the twisted ones is eliminated is up to them. One character might elect to make a run for the tomb with the skull while the others take up defensive positions to prevent the twisted ones from following. Award the PCs full XP for this encounter however they end the twisted ones' threat.

Treasure

Valmour's *ironskin belt* can be claimed by the PCs if he is slain. If he lives, he is so grateful for the PCs' intervention that he gives them the belt in exchange for saving him.

2 Twisted Hulks (H) **Level 12 Brute**
Large natural humanoid, human XP 700
Initiative +8 **Senses** Perception +9, darkvision
HP 150; **Bloodied** 75; see also *curse carrier*
AC 24; **Fortitude** 27, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 22
Speed 7
⊕ **Clobber** (standard; at-will)
Reach 2; +15 vs. AC; 2d8 + 8 damage, and the target is pushed 1 square; see also *bestow curse*.
↓ **Bestow Curse** (free; when the twisted hulk's attack bloodies an enemy; at-will)
Bloodied target only; +14 vs. Will; the target is cursed with twisted domination.
✧ **Curse Carrier** (when reduced to 0 hit points) ✦ **Charm, Polymorph**
Close burst 1; +14 vs. Will; the target is cursed with twisted domination (page 64).
Sense Master
A twisted one can sense the distance and direction of the creature or remains whose tomb it is driven to guard.
Alignment Evil **Languages** Common
Str 24 (+13) **Dex** 14 (+8) **Wis** 7 (+4)
Con 20 (+11) **Int** 7 (+4) **Cha** 14 (+8)

About the Author

Tim Hitchcock has been a prolific contributor to *Dungeon* for years now. This is his first 4th Edition adventure, which he designed with unfinished core books. The staff thinks that despite this handicap, Tim did a fantastic job.

Twisted Foulmaw (F) **Level 11 Elite Artillery**
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 1,200
Initiative +7 **Senses** Perception +10; darkvision
HP 172; **Bloodied** 86; see also *curse carrier*
AC 25; **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 26
Saving Throws +2
Speed 6
Action Point 1
⊕ **Bone Staff** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+14 vs. AC; 1d8 + 6 damage.
↛ **Disrupting Orb** (standard; at-will)
Range 10; +14 vs. Reflex; 1d10 + 5 damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).
✧ **Curse Carrier** (when reduced to 0 hit points) ✦ **Charm, Polymorph**
Close burst 1; +13 vs. Will; the target is cursed with twisted domination (page 64).
✧ **Corrupt Breath** (standard; recharges when first bloodied) ✦ **Charm, Polymorph**
Close blast 5; targets enemies; +13 vs. Fortitude; 2d8 + 6 damage, and the target is cursed with twisted domination (page 64).
✲ **Twisted Connection** (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅)
Area burst 1 within 10; targets enemies; +13 vs. Will; 2d6 + 4 psychic damage, and one effect currently affecting the twisted foulmaw immediately ends on the foulmaw and is transferred to the target. If the effect has a fixed duration, that duration begins again on the new character.
Distort Space (immediate interrupt, when the twisted foulmaw would be bit by an attack) ✦ **Teleportation**
The twisted foulmaw teleports 2 squares and makes a *disrupting orb* attack against the attacker.
Sense Master
A twisted one can sense the distance and direction of the creature or remains whose tomb it is driven to guard.
Alignment Evil **Languages** Common
Str 12 (+6) **Dex** 14 (+7) **Wis** 11 (+5)
Con 14 (+7) **Int** 16 (+8) **Cha** 18 (+9)
Equipment bone staff

Valmour, Twisted One (V) **Level 12 Elite Soldier (Leader)**
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 1,400
Initiative +11 **Senses** Perception +6; darkvision
HP 236; **Bloodied** 118; see also *curse carrier*
AC 27; **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 25, **Will** 23
Saving Throws +2
Speed 5
Action Points 1
⊕ **Claws** (standard; at-will)
+19 vs. AC; 2d6 + 7 damage, and the target is marked (save ends); see also *enemy of the tomb*.
↓ **Enemy of the Tomb** (standard; at-will)
Marked target only; +19 vs. AC; 2d6 + 7 damage, and the target is immobilized and takes ongoing 5 damage (save ends both).
↓ **Arc of Lightning** (immediate reaction, when Valmour is hit by a melee attack; at-will) ✦ **Lightning**
Valmour makes an attack against the attacker; +15 vs. Reflex; 1d10 + 5 lightning damage, and the target is slowed until the end of its next turn.
✧ **Curse Carrier** (when reduced to 0 hit points) ✦ **Charm, Polymorph**
Close burst 2; +14 vs. Will; the target is cursed with twisted domination (page 64).
Cursed Leader
An ally that uses the *curse carrier* power within 10 squares of Valmour increases the power's area from burst 1 to burst 2.
Ironskin Belt (minor; daily)
Valmour gains resist 10 against all weapon damage until the end of his next turn.
Sense Master
A twisted one can sense the distance and direction of the creature or remains whose tomb it is driven to guard.
Alignment Evil **Languages** Common
Str 17 (+9) **Dex** 16 (+9) **Wis** 11 (+6)
Con 14 (+8) **Int** 15 (+8) **Cha** 16 (+9)
Equipment chainmail, *ironskin belt*

HEROIC
1–10

by Shawn Merwin

Massacre at Fort Dolor

illustrations by Stephen Crowe and Jim Nelson ✦ cartography by Sean Macdonald

IN AN AREA recently freed from the assaults of a powerful white dragon, an oft-destroyed military outpost has been rebuilt and now grows prosperous. The walls of the fort are sturdy, and both civilian and military inhabitants have eased into a routine in the thriving community. However, an unlikely prophecy from a mysterious visitor starts a chain of events that threaten Fort Dolor—and all its inhabitants—once again.

"Massacre at Fort Dolor" is a D&D adventure for five 8th-level PCs. The adventure takes place in an area on the edge of a civilized nation, where cold weather, looming mountains, and a dark forest pose a constant threat to settlers.

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Adventure Background

More than a century ago, a fortified town was built in the hinterlands of a prosperous nation. The fort-town housed an army garrison tasked to protect the valuable resources and trading routes running through this still-wild corner of the nation. The land bordered on mountains rich in precious ore, on forests holding valuable timber, and on a river that provided fertile farmland.

Unfortunately, the land also held terrible dangers, the greatest of which was the powerful white dragon Frystiomagythant. As soon as the fort-town grew large enough to draw his attention, the dragon destroyed it. Failing to understand the scope of the problem, the nation's leaders rebuilt the fort; the town within the fort would thereafter grow anew, only to suffer the wrath of the dragon once again. This devastation happened numerous times, killing scores in the process.

Finally, just as the fort-town, nicknamed Fort Dolor by the unlucky inhabitants, grew large enough to be doomed to another dragon attack, a band of adventurers braved Frystiomagythant's icy lair and slew the dragon. With that threat gone, the fort-town was free to grow more prosperous than ever before. Miners, loggers, farmers, and craftspeople quickly learned of the opportunities offered in the rich lands around Fort Dolor. The once-doomed town is now seen as a place to make one's fortune.

Two years have passed since the vanquishing of the dragon, and Fort Dolor has quickly turned into a place where even garrison troops finally see being stationed there as something more than just a death sentence. The locals who survived the dragon's attacks have started to forget the past troubles, but a new threat grows.

The lair of the white dragon housed a portal to the hellish realm of Dis, but the great dragon had prevented anything from opening the gate. With the defeat of the dragon, the portal is once again a viable passage for devils entering this realm. A howling hag named Trilleste learned of the portal, and she entered the lair after the death of the dragon to open it.

The first devil through the portal was a succubus called Xeriope. She serves Ichyrot, a chain devil master who commanded the succubus to assist the howling hag in sowing confusion and treachery in the land around the portal while he raised enough devilish troops to create an army and establish a foothold here. Xeriope quickly took stock of the situation, and she saw Fort Dolor slowly becoming a stable and well-fortified settlement in the area. She knew she had to act quickly, before Fort Dolor became too large and too powerful to be conquered by the impending devilish invasion.

Trilleste, Xeriope, and some of their devilish minions destroyed a few outlying farms and logging camps but ignored the mining camps, thus making it look as though the threat came from the forest rather than the mountains. Then, using her ability to take alternate forms, Xeriope masqueraded as the lone survivor of an attack on one of the farms. The garrison troops who investigated the attack brought her back to Fort Dolor, and she charmed the garrison commander, a strict taskmaster but revered soldier named Captain Revince. Under Xeriope's influence, Captain Revince unknowingly sent patrols into ambushes arranged by Trilleste and Xeriope, so that now only a small group of garrison troops remains, and those are the most unfit and incorrigible of soldiers.

Before the attacks began, Trilleste took the form of an old dwarf hermit. She entered Fort Dolor and began spouting prophecies with the hopes of keeping the focus of the townsfolk away from the dragon's lair, ensuring that no one would learn about the portal. She also hoped that the false prophecies would help sway the attitude of the townspeople, leading them to make decisions that would favor the devils.

She stood in front of the Avalanche Inn and spoke of visions she'd had. Based on those (nonexistent) visions, she spoke the following prophecies:

- A danger brewed in the dark forest, awakened from years of slumber by the loggers who now ventured there for timber.
- The evil from the woods will first kill loggers and farmers in the area.
- Only one will survive the attacks, and that one is the key to defeating the evil.
- Many soldiers will die in the battle with the evil, but none will ever find their bodies.
- Strangers will come to town with intentions of helping against the evil, but those strangers will inadvertently lead to the destruction of Fort Dolor.

With these prophecies in mind, the residents of the fort went about their business, thinking them the rants of a crazed dwarf. Slowly, however, the prophecies came true—mainly because Trilleste, Xeriope, and their small force made them come true. Loggers and farmers died, one young woman (Xeriope pretending to be a farmer's daughter) survived an attack, and most of the garrison soldiers have disappeared while out patrolling and investigating attacks. Now the PCs have arrived, and the residents of Fort Dolor are afraid they are going to somehow lead to the town's downfall. Of course, Trilleste said this to sow discord and reduce the possibility that any heroes might arrive to foil the plans of Ichyrot's forces.

Adventure Synopsis

When the PCs arrive at Fort Dolor, they find the place strangely quiet and the citizens reluctant to speak to them. Most of the places of business are closed, people have locked their doors to strangers, and the garrison barracks contain only a few soldiers.

Taking part in a skill challenge can give the PCs more information. A complete success brings to them one of the garrison soldiers, who explains that he knows the grieving farmer's daughter is not what she appears. This leads the PCs directly to the encounter with the succubus without any further complication. A partial success draws the attention of Lieutenant Stymers, a corrupt soldier who is using the current unrest in Fort Dolor to steal military supplies for sale on the black market. After the confrontation with Stymers and his lackeys, the PCs can learn about the situation with the Xeriope and Captain Revince, and they can go there after dealing with the corrupt soldiers. Total failure of the skill challenge means the PCs are given false leads, and they might follow a false trail into the dark forest. They must then wait for a newly arrived garrison commander before learning of Xeriope's tricks, and the delay in dealing with the problems makes later encounters in the devils' lair more challenging.

After confronting the succubus Xeriope, the PCs learn the location of Trilleste in her disguise as the dwarf hermit. Clues here reveal that a new evil has taken residence in the old lair of the white dragon. If circumstances in the town allow, the PCs can gather information about the location and layout of the dragon's old lair, which might assist them in their foray against the devilish inhabitants of the lair and those who serve the devils.

Finally, after dealing with the threats and investigations in and around Fort Dolor, the PCs can brave the white dragon's former lair, now home to a growing number of devils and those who serve the otherworldly evil. If the PCs succeed in defeating the inhabitants of the lair, they can find the chamber holding the portal. To close it, they must first defeat Ichyrot, the chain devil leader of the devilish invasion.

The Quests

"Massacre at Fort Dolor" offers the opportunity for PCs to earn quest XP once they discover the true problem behind the area's apparent woes.

Major Quest—Closing the Portal
Once the PCs discover and close the portal, they can receive an experience point award, plus the thanks of the locals.
Reward: 1,750 XP.

Preparing for Adventure

The adventure presents encounters that tell a complete story. However, you can add tangential encounters to the adventure if desired. Any of the inhabitants in Fort Dolor could send the PCs on a side mission in return for promising to tell them more about what is happening there.

Although the skill challenge in A Town's Worst Fear contains information on specific locations and NPCs within Fort Dolor, many locations have been purposefully left undeveloped to allow you to add your own encounters or information. If Fort Dolor is used as a base of operations for the PCs, you can add other businesses or services of value or interest. DM-created NPCs with whom the PCs can establish long-term relationships could be placed in some of the unspecified buildings in Fort Dolor.

Starting the Adventure

Read or paraphrase the following to start the adventure:

The rumors you heard said the best place to find adventure and wealth is a fortified town on the edge of civilization called Fort Dolor. The place is still considered wilderness by even the hardiest souls, but its location makes it important: it's near a mountain range teeming with valuable ore deposits, at the edge of a huge forest full of uncut timber, and in the vicinity of a large river that makes the farmland rich and bountiful during the growing season. Miners, loggers, and farmers brave enough to withstand the dangers of the area have been moving there. The region around Fort Dolor is dangerous, however, and brave adventurers are always in high demand wherever danger prevails—especially where danger is in such close proximity to valuable resources.

If the PCs want more information about Fort Dolor and the surrounding area, allow the following skill checks to provide it:

History

DC 10: For the last 100 years, this area has resisted all attempts to tame it. Attacks from the mountains, the forest, and the wilds—by threats both natural and unnatural—have always destroyed anyone trying to bring civilization here.

DC 15: The largest threat to the area was a white dragon, which was vanquished by adventurers two years ago. Since that time, the area has begun to prosper like never before. Other threats, such as goblinoids and wild animals, are still present.

DC 25: The garrison at Fort Dolor currently holds more than 200 soldiers, and it is commanded by Captain Revince, a leader known for his no-nonsense attitude and strategic brilliance.

Dungeoneering

DC 15: Long ago, the mountains in the area were home to a large clan of dwarves. The clan disappeared, and no one knows what happened to them. Since that time, the mountains are rumored to contain all manner of creatures and their respective lairs. None of these rumors have been substantiated.

Nature

DC 10: The land around Fort Dolor is temperate during the spring and summer months, but immediately after the fall harvest, a long and brutal winter descends. During these winters, wild animals looking for food become desperate enough to approach civilized areas and sometimes attack humanoids.

DC 15: Goblinoid creatures have made their homes in the forests near Fort Dolor. Their levels of activity rise and fall as the seasons and years pass, depending on their food levels, changes in leadership, and other factors.

After the PCs have gained their information, performed their research, gathered their supplies, and undertaken their journey to Fort Dolor, describe the scene when they arrive:

The journey to Fort Dolor proved relatively uneventful. The spring thaw meant the days were warm enough, but the nights had a chill to them still. As you approach Fort Dolor, you see a wooden palisade built at the base of a great mountain. The palisade surrounds several wooden and stone structures, and the recent prosperity of the area has resulted in newer wooden structures being built outside the enclosed fort.

Although you have arrived during a sunny afternoon, no one is working on the half-built structures outside the palisade walls. Watchtowers looming over the gates into the fort are unmanned, and the gates stand open. Within the palisade walls, the doors and windows of the buildings are closed and shuttered. No signs of life greet you, save for the smoke coming from the chimney of a large stone building in the center of town.

The building at the center of town with the fireplace burning is the Avalanche Inn. That is the best place for the PCs to start searching for answers about the current situation in Fort Dolor. They can go to other places to search for answers, of course. The investigation of the happenings at Fort Dolor is described in A Town's Worst Fear.

A Town's Worst Fear

This section contains both a description of the forttown of Fort Dolor, as well as a skill challenge. The PCs can investigate the locations within and around Fort Dolor, seeking news from the citizens and inhabitants.

The town before you seems strangely quiet, and its citizens turn away from you as you make your way down the streets. Windows and doors are shut, businesses are closed, and many buildings are dark. If you are to learn anything of the town and what is going on, you must figure out where to start.

Setup: The PCs have to work hard to learn any information from the residents of Fort Dolor. The PCs can travel to various locations and make skill checks to attempt to extract information from the townsfolk. Each successful check counts as a success toward the skill challenge. A failed check counts as a failure. Unlike a normal skill challenge, the PCs must visit the various town locations before they can make an appropriate check. In addition, if the PCs fail the skill challenge but still have three successes, they achieve partial success (see Success and Failure at the end of the encounter). Regardless of the number of successes or failures, the PCs can choose to follow certain investigative paths, which could lead to other encounters.

In addition, the PCs might find other creative ways to achieve success. The PCs might attempt to stand outside a door or window and overhear a conversation using a Stealth or Perception check. They might try to gain the trust or favor of a townsperson by helping an ailing child with a Heal check. They might try use a Bluff check to gain someone's trust by convincing them they are someone else. The following section can also be run without a skill challenge component, though the framework of this section outlines the DCs and potential success points for a skill challenge.

Level: 8.

Complexity: 2 (requires 6 successes before 3 failures).

Primary Skills: See each area entry below for specific primary skills.

Success: If the PCs attain sufficient successes, or if they defeat Lieutenant Stymers after gathering proof of his crimes, they are approached by a tiefling called Private Zanphist. Read or paraphrase the following:

Striding purposefully toward you is a tiefling wearing the uniform of a private. When he is ten feet away from you, he salutes. "Private Zanphist, wishing to speak with you." He stands at attention, apparently awaiting an answer.

If given leave to speak, the tiefling reports seeing Captain Revince kissing the girl Xeriope in the barracks when she was first brought in. He then heard her order him to send out small patrols to specific locations around the area. None of those patrols returned. He knows that the girl was taken to the home of the herbalist, and he is sure the captain is there with her. He tried to report this to Lieutenant Stymers, who is in command now, but the lieutenant ignored him. He knows that Stymers is up to no good and that he is lying about having sent for reinforcements.

Partial Success: If the PCs reach three failures but earn at least three successes, the PCs are confronted by Lieutenant Stymers, who knows what is happening in town but is letting it happen since he and his cronies are profiting off the situation. This result is described in Encounter 1.

Failure: If the PCs reach three failures before reaching three successes, they are completely stymied in their attempts to figure out what is happening. Everyone refuses to speak to them, and the only lead they have points them into the forest. This result is described in Lost in the Woods.

Area 1: The Avalanche Inn

This newly constructed wood and stone building is owned and operated by a dwarf called Skeetty by the locals. When the PCs arrive at the Avalanche Inn, only one other person is there apart from Skeetty: a female halfling named Jirl Ondish. Jirl came to the area two days ago to see if she should bring the rest of her family to start a business moving goods up and down the river. Given the current climate and circumstances in Fort Dolor, she is waiting until the situation resolves itself. Having been in the fort for only two days, she is in the same predicament as the PCs. She can offer them no help, but she might draw the suspicions of the PCs during their investigations if the DM wishes.

Skeetty is just as scared as everyone else by the prophecies, but he is also a consummate businessman. While he might believe that the PCs could be the (falsely prophesied) "strangers that will bring

destruction to Fort Dolor," he also doesn't want to lose the PCs' coin by being rude.

Diplomacy (DC Varies): A PC that talks to Skeetty about the town makes a Diplomacy check. The DC is normally 14, but it is lowered to 8 if the character spends at least 5 gp first. If the check fails, Skeetty mutters, "Don't much know. Need a drink or meal?" Only one PC can make a Diplomacy check to achieve a success in this way, though if that check fails, another character can try if the group obliges Skeetty's offer of drink and a meal, and spends at least 5 gp. On a successful Diplomacy check, Skeetty opens up a bit, revealing any of the following points of information.

- "After that dragon was killed by those heroes, things started to look up. I bought me this inn, knowing that there was going to be a big rush. For two years now things have been picking up. But then a couple months ago that crazy dwarf came to town and said all those things. Since then, times have been dark."
- "The dwarf lives around here somewhere, but I ain't sure where. Not in town, but close enough that she can walk here. She started talking about the evil in the forest coming for us. People thought she was just a little off her nut. But then logging camps and farmsteads starting getting attacked, just like she said. Only one survived all those attacks, just like she said. Then the garrison soldiers who were sent out to patrol and investigate the attacks started disappearing, just like she said. We're just waiting for the last of it to come true."
- "The final thing she said was that strangers would come to town. They would mean to do good for us, but they would end up causing everyone in this place—the town, not the tavern—to be killed by the evil. And here you are. Strangers. Just like that halfling down there. It might be best if you just left."
- "The one who survived was the daughter of one of the farmers who put down roots west of here a couple years back. They say her whole family was killed, just like they always are when the attacks come. But the evil must have overlooked her. The soldiers who went to investigate brought her back and took her to the barracks about three weeks back. I haven't heard much tell about her since then. People started to become scared then for real, but when the soldiers started not coming back from their patrols, that sent everyone into a tizzy. Shops all closed. People only come out when they have to."

Aside from the above information, Skeetty can provide only basic information: where things are in town, the general location of the farmsteads in the area, and where the forest that holds the "great evil" is located. He does admit that the general store owner Trujy is just about the only person in town who deals with strangers anymore, and that is only to sell them what they need.

Area 2: The Barracks

The barracks are two well-made two-story stone buildings abutting the completely vertical side of a mountain. A tall flagpole near the front entrance stands bare with no flag flying. The doors of the main entrance are closed, and all the windows are shuttered.

The barracks are mostly empty because the devil-charmed commander of the garrison, Captain Revince, has been sending out patrols at the suggestion of the succubus Xeriope. The patrols have been ambushed by the succubus and her allies, causing the number of soldiers to decrease from 220 to 30.

At least half the remaining troops are loyal only to Lieutenant Stymers. Stymers is an underhanded soldier who has realized that something is adversely affecting his captain. He has used this to his advantage, though, rather than trying to discover the source of the problem. The barracks holds supplies for more than 200 soldiers, but with so few remaining, Stymers can steal the extra supplies from the garrison, sell them to an unscrupulous merchant at a greatly reduced price, and pocket the money.

At least one soldier remaining in the garrison has a sense of honor. Private Zanphist is a loyal and dutiful soldier, but he is distrusted because he is a tiefling. Zanphist was sent here after enlisting in the military to prove himself. Upon his arrival, the other soldiers roughed up Zanphist and when he defended himself, he was branded a troublemaker. Lieutenant Stymers ignores Zanphist for the most part, and unknown to the lieutenant, Private Zanphist recently witnessed Captain Revince kissing Xeriope. In addition, he heard the succubus telling the captain to send patrols off into the woods for no apparent reason. Zanphist suspects something is off about Xeriope, but he doesn't know what to do about it.

Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate (DC 14): A PC who goes to the entrance of the barracks is met by an elf crony of Lieutenant Stymers named Private Frome. He is dismissive and tells them that the person in charge (Captain Revince) is away on patrol for at least a week. A PC who makes a successful DC 14 Diplomacy, Bluff, or Intimidate check can persuade Frome to bring Lieutenant Stymers to the door. A successful check achieves one success in the skill challenge, and

each failed check counts as a failure. Each character can attempt a check only once.

Insight (DC 14): Stymers is a tall, gaunt human who wears a perpetual sneer and speaks condescendingly. If the PCs ask him questions about what is going on in Fort Dolor, he tells them that the soldiers are in charge of the situation and that the PCs are not welcome in Fort Dolor. If the PCs inquire about the absence of troops, Stymer claims that more troops should be arriving shortly. Stymers is evasive and lies at each opportunity in an effort to dismiss the PCs. A successful Insight check achieves a success in the skill challenge and allows the PCs to realize that Stymers is being purposefully deceitful and evasive.

If the PCs have proof that Stymers is selling military supplies on the black market and confront him on his crimes, he promises to tell him what he knows and urges them to wait outside the fort until he can talk to them in private. Stymers then gathers his cronies and attacks the PCs, as described in Encounter 1.

Area 3: Trujy's General Store

A sign in front of this wooden building announces that this is Trujy's General Store. The windows are shuttered and no lights shine out from inside. Barrels outside the building for holding goods are empty.

Trujy lives in a two-room suite at the back of her store. She is a middle-aged elf with long hair flowing freely down her back. Normally she is extremely gregarious and outgoing, but the recent happenings have left her morose and scared. If the PCs knock on her door or call out to her, Trujy answers. She opens the door just a crack and asks the PCs their business. If the PCs ask her for information or news, she tells them she doesn't have any, and she closes and locks the door. If they express an interest in purchasing goods, she allows them to enter the store, which is well stocked with a variety of items, including clothing, farming tools, mining tools, timber-cutting tools, simple weapons, dried goods, building tools, hardware, and so on.

Bluff or Thievery (DC 14): A character who has a passive Perception of 14 or higher notices an open book on Trujy's counter, which she keeps glancing at nervously. A PC can distract Trujy with a successful DC 14 Bluff check, at which point the book can be obtained without her noticing with a successful DC 14 Thievery check. Each check achieves one success in the skill challenge.

The book is a journal and business ledger. The last entry states that Trujy is having trouble with the manager of the warehouse. He promised her more room for her goods, but then he failed to follow through on his promise, claiming that he didn't have the room. When she asked him who was using her reserved space, he refused to answer and acted nervous. If the PCs confront Trujy on this, she affirms what she has written in her journal. She can tell the PCs the location of the warehouse if they are interested in investigating.

Diplomacy or Intimidate (DC 14): A character who has a passive Insight of 14 or higher notices that Trujy seems distracted and shaky. A character can make a successful DC 14 Diplomacy check or DC 14 Intimidate check to persuade Trujy into admitting the source of her fear. If a Diplomacy check fails, a character can attempt an Intimidate check, or vice versa. However, only one success in the skill challenge can be achieved through a successful check here. On a successful check, Trujy admits that she fears Fort Dolor might fall to an evil lurking in the forest. She has spoken to a rancher outside Fort Dolor, and he knows more about the problems that Fort Dolor faces. Trujy willingly directs the group to the ranch.

Area 4: The Warehouses

As you approach the large buildings with wide doorways and great shuttered windows, a dwarf opens a smaller door and exits. He wields an axe and wears light armor. "Begone!" he shouts. "You have no business with me, and I certainly have no business with you."

The warehouses are a series of large buildings owned and operated by a dwarf named Otrun Oremont. Otrun purchased these buildings just before the defeat of the white dragon two years ago. His brother, Ebril Oremont, was one of the adventurers who slew the dragon. With the ore, timber, foodstuff, and other goods coming in from the land surrounding Fort Dolor, he has done well.

Diplomacy or Stealth (DC 14): Otrun does not wish to speak to the PCs and threatens to call the garrison soldiers if the characters seem confrontational. His guards have fled Fort Dolor and he is now forced to guard his own warehouses. A PC who makes a successful DC 14 Diplomacy check can persuade Otrun to talk, at which point he reveals his plight and offers to pay the character 1 silver piece each per day to work as guards. A PC can also attempt to make a successful DC 14 Stealth check followed by a DC 21 Thievery check to secretly gain entry to the warehouse. As long as the check allows the PCs to gain access to the warehouse, they gain a success in the skill challenge, though they can gain only one such success here.

Inside, a PC can make a DC 14 Perception check (or an equivalent passive Perception check) to discover several suspicious crates covered with tarps.

These crates contain military supplies, though the military insignia has been removed from the goods. Some paperwork confirms that these goods are intended for sale at a fraction of their worth to a merchant in a week's time.

If Otrun is confronted with this information, he explains that he knows nothing of the illegal activities. He says that Lieutenant Stymers commandeered the space for military purposes. If the PCs confront Stymers with the materials they discovered, it triggers Encounter 1 (see also The Barracks).

Area 5: The Ranch

Ahead of you, the ranch has wide pastures that are fenced off and filled with several horses. A stable stands off to the side, ahead and to the right, and its doors are open. Beyond it stands a simple wooden house.

An eladrin rancher named Aestirol lives outside the fort. He breeds and raises horses, and he is also in charge of stabling and maintaining the horses for the military. If the PCs go to the rancher, they find him in his stable attending to a horse about to birth a foal. Aestirol is angry at the disturbance, explaining that the mare giving birth is having complications. He orders the PCs to leave him alone.

Nature (DC 14): A PC can recognize the problem with the colt's birth with a successful DC 14 Nature check. Aestirol is grateful for the assistance and rewards the PCs by answering their questions, regardless if the foal lives or dies. A successful use of the Nature skill earns the PCs a success in the skill challenge.

Heal (DC 21): Once a character has diagnosed the problem with a Nature check, a PC can make a DC 21 Heal check to see if he or she can save the life of

the foal. A successful check earns the PCs one success in the skill challenge.

Once the foal is birthed, and assuming the PCs offer assistance (even if the foal dies), the rancher tells them that Captain Revince, the commander of the garrison troops, has been acting strangely for the last three weeks. He has been ordering small patrols to go out frequently without reason, and most of the patrols haven't returned. In addition, Captain Revince has been missing for several days. The last time Aestirol saw Revince was when he was at the herbalist's shop late at night a couple weeks ago.

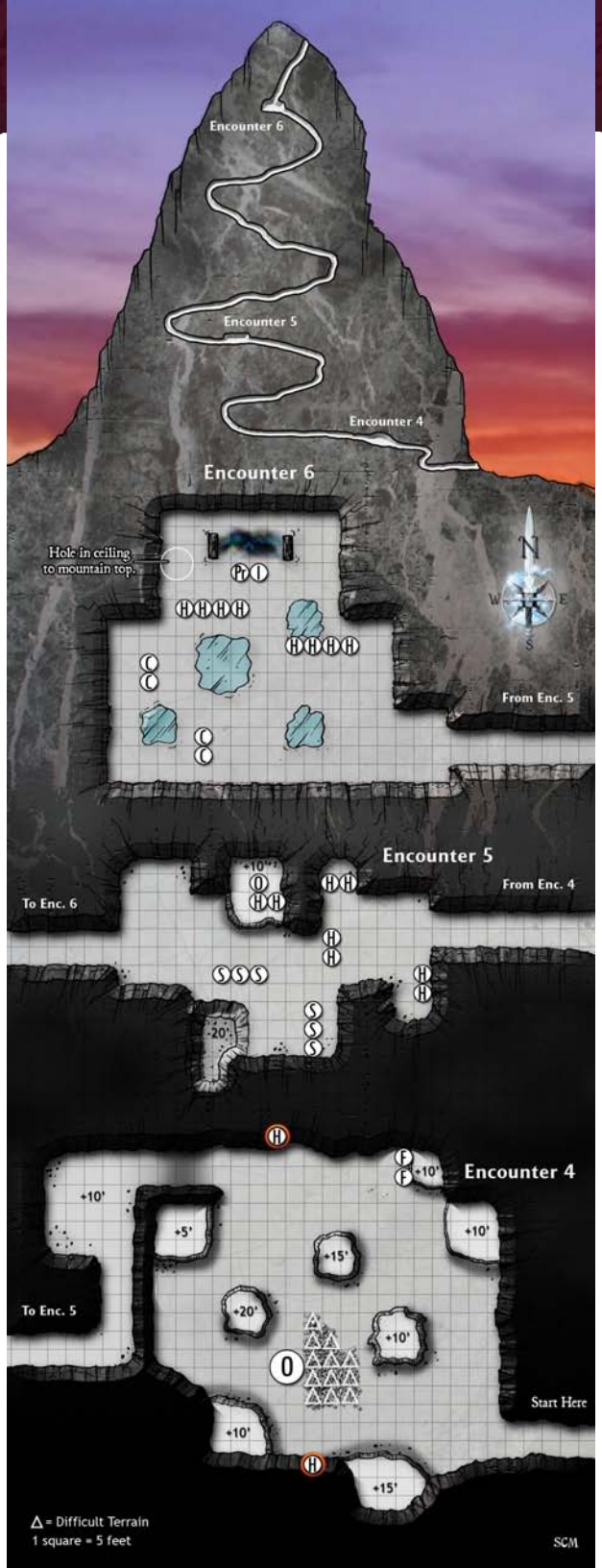
Area 6: The Herbalist

This building is one of the few you have seen where the windows are not shuttered. Light emerges from the open windows, and a sweet, pleasant smell permeates the air around it. A large greenhouse is attached to the building.

The herbalist, a young human man named Phlen, is the closest thing Fort Dolor has to a healer, and his house doubles as the herb shop. Phlen is currently caring for Xeriope, a succubus in the guise of the bedraggled daughter of a slain farmer. Phlen was the son of loggers killed by the white dragon several years ago, when he was just a young lad. He survived and was taken in by a kind, old herbalist woman. The old herbalist passed away two years ago, so Phlen took over, practicing what he has learned.

Xeriope was found at an isolated farmstead, where she had killed the occupants and then inflicted wounds to make it seem as though someone had attacked her. The patrol of soldiers that found Xeriope brought her to Phlen, who treated her physical wounds. Xeriope pretended to be in shock, so Phlen gave her a room where she could recover from her grief. Phlen knows enough about the mortal body to recognize that something isn't right with Xeriope, but he is a trusting soul and attributes the oddity to whatever force invaded her farm and killed her parents.

When Phlen greets the PCs at the door, he is wary. He was instructed not to tell anyone that Xeriope is staying at his home or that Captain Revince visits frequently and has been with her for several days. However, Phlen does invite the PCs inside. Xeriope



and Captain Revince are in a bedroom down a hallway and can hear the PCs speak to Phlen.

Insight (DC 14): If a PC asks about the Xeriope, Phlen lies and says that he treated her and then she left. A successful DC 14 Insight check detects the lie, and if he is called out on the lie, he admits that Xeriope is in his place and he is still caring for her as she recovers from grief and mental trauma. A character who succeeds on the Insight check achieves a success in the skill challenge.

Phlen refuses to let the PCs see Xeriope, but if the PCs do reach Xeriope and Captain Revince, they feign normalcy. Xeriope pretends to be still in shock at the attack and death of her family, which she claims was the result of a rampaging owlbear.

If the PCs incite a fight, Encounter 2 occurs.

Lost in the Woods

This section should be used only if the PCs failed the skill challenge completely or did something else that made it impossible for them to learn the truth about Xeriope at Fort Dolor.

This section is strictly a roleplaying encounter (though DMs could turn it into another skill challenge, using survival skills and perhaps a few random creatures). If the PCs head off into the woods to search for clues about the evil lurking there, read or paraphrase the following:

After a journey of two days, you arrive at a logging camp at the edge of the forest. Several humans and a few elves toil here, hauling timber and cutting logs. They wave to you as you approach.

While the loggers here have heard of other attacks at sites in the area, none of them have witnessed any. They can give the PCs directions to the closest logging camp where an attack took place.

The PCs travel two days deeper into the woods, coming across nothing of interest. When they reach the location where the attack supposedly occurred, they find a functioning logging camp. The loggers here are surprised that anyone thought they had been attacked. They offer information on a camp they heard was attacked, but the directions they give are to the original logging camp the PCs visited.

The PCs, after a little investigation but several days wasted, should realize that perhaps the evil in the woods was not as big a threat as people feared. They can head back to Fort Dolor, but the time they have wasted in the woods means more devils have come through the portal, making some of the fights in the devil's lair more difficult.

After their return from the woods (or if the PCs are forced to wait for another reason, such as being arrested or failing to receive any help from the townspeople), the PCs arrive at Fort Dolor to see the place crawling with scores of garrison soldiers. Read or paraphrase the following:

As you approach the fort, you notice the watch-towers are now manned with a full complement of troops. Other soldiers are drilling in front of the main gate. A short, stocky female in a captain's uniform shouts orders to other soldiers preparing horses.

The female is the new commander of the garrison—a half-elf called Captain Kahvahna. Word of the loss of the garrison soldiers finally reached the commanders of the military in the capital city, and although they were not expected, Captain Kahvahna arrived with replacements to bring order back to Fort Dolor.

If the reinforcements arrive before the PCs learn about the true nature of Xeriope and the crimes of Lieutenant Stymers, Private Zanphist tells Captain Kahvahna everything. She deals with Stymers, but she is hesitant to send troops after Captain Revince. Many of these soldiers are fond of him, and she does not want a conflict. She asks the PCs to investigate instead, insisting that Revince and the girl be taken alive.

To the Portal

Once the PCs have defeated Xeriope by either completing the skill challenge or being bailed out by the arrival of Captain Kahvahna, they can proceed to the lair of Trilleste (see page 96).

Once Trilleste has been defeated, the PCs find notes detailing the dragon's lair and the portal it holds. Landmarks described in the notes enable the characters to find their way to the warren of caves in which the dragon once lived . . . and where Ichyrot now pursues his plans to bring a legion of devils into the mortal world. The dragon's lair consists of several connected caves, most of which are separated by long, twisting tunnels.

Entry Guardians

The entrance to the white dragon's former lair is guarded by creatures loyal to Ichyrot—either voluntary, in the case of the flameskulls, or enslaved, as with the well-fed owlbear.

Tactical Encounter: "Entry Guardians" (page 98).

Vile Works

Once a chamber used by the dragon to keep prisoners or later meals, Ichyrot now uses this chamber as a staging ground for his invasion force. As more soldiers have moved through the portal from the Nine Hells, they've been moved to this cavern to await further orders.

Tactical Encounter: "Vile Works" (page 100).

The Blood-Soaked Portal

This chamber, the heart of the dragon's lair, once held its vast horde . . . and it still holds a portal to Dis. Ichyrot and his personal guard have taken up residence here.

Tactical Encounter: "The Blood-Soaked Portal" (page 102).

Concluding the Adventure

Back at Fort Dolor, after the PCs close the portal, they are treated well, but many of the citizens are still standoffish toward them: Some find it difficult to understand that the prophecies delivered by the howling hag were false, and the bad luck suffered by Fort Dolor over the years does not leave the minds of its citizens that easily.

If the PCs could not close the portal, no one at Fort Dolor can help them.

Further Adventures

If you are running this adventure as part of an ongoing campaign, you can use some of these plot threads to link to adventures:

- Perhaps further adventures are needed to find the true method of closing the portal to Dis forever.
- Ichyrot the chain devil might have served a master on Dis whose plans involved more than just this one incursion. That master might wish revenge on the mortals who ruined his plans.
- What happened to the dwarves those many centuries ago? Do other evils lurk within the mountain around Fort Dolor?
- Lieutenant Stymers sold goods to a merchant deeply invested in a black market. That merchant is probably dealing with other shady individuals.

Lieutenant Stymers's Black Market Band

Encounter Level 10 (2,500 XP)

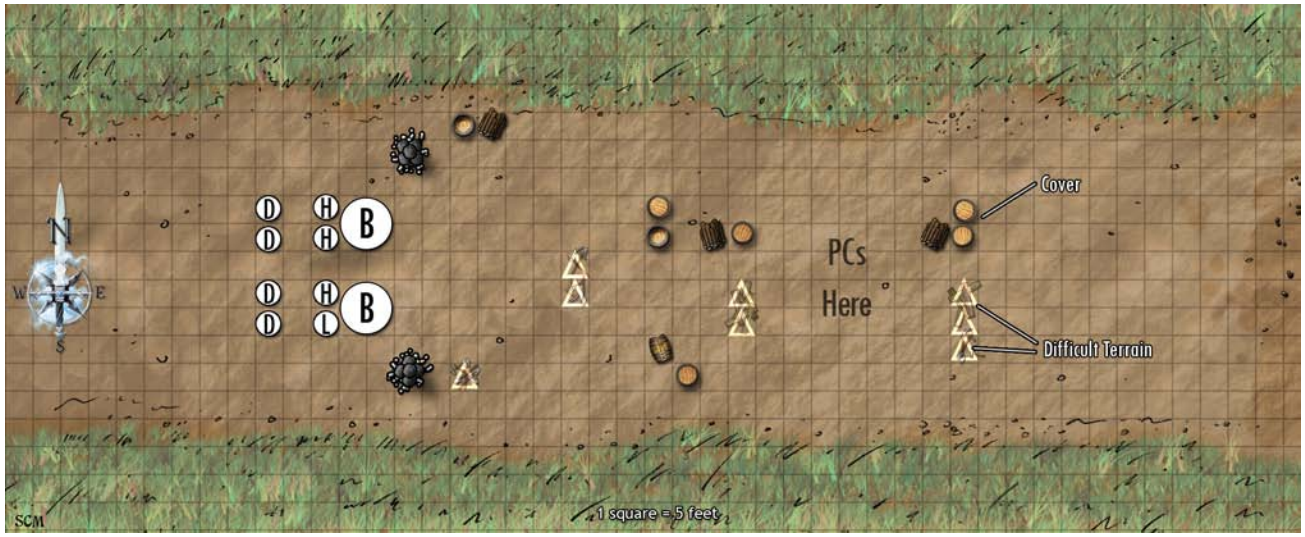
Setup

This encounter is optional, and it should happen only if the PCs earn a partial success in the skill challenge described in Encounter 1. It is likely that the PCs might learn about the illegal activities of Lieutenant Stymers and his cronies, so they might choose to confront him even if they earn a total success during the skill challenge. However, the encounter assumes that it is Stymers who learns of the PCs' progress in finding out about the situation in Fort Dolor and confronts them first. He fears that if the PCs undo whatever spell Captain Revince is under, his enterprise is doomed, and he might even face execution for his crimes against the military.

4 human veterans (V)
4 dwarf bolters (D)
2 dire boars (B)

When the characters are approached by Lieutenant Stymers, read the following. Adjust the text based on the situation of the fight with Stymers and his lackeys.

Approaching you are four human soldiers and four dwarf soldiers wearing uniforms. One of the humans appears to be a lieutenant. Large boars, attached to leashes and held by two of the human soldiers, are snuffling and snorting through their tusked snouts.



Tactics

The boars are trained to attack on command, and they are sent to engage the strongest-looking PCs. The boars charge if possible. The soldiers and bolters attempt to attack any of the PC strikers and neutralize them.

The boars fight to the death, but none of the others are willing to stay around for a difficult fight. As soon as Lieutenant Stymers is bloodied, he flees to the barracks, ordering the others to cover his retreat. Once that happens, the rest also flee when bloodied.

Features of the Area

Stymers' confrontation with the PCs, if and when it happens, probably takes place in an area where construction is just beginning on new buildings.

Construction: Several piles of wooden planks and beams, as well as piles of stone and brick provide cover. Other areas of the field are covered with tools or have been dug up a little, making terrain in that area difficult.

Treasure: Other than their weapons and armor, Stymers and his group have only a few silver pieces among them. Their equipment is the property of the military, as are the gold coins that Stymers has earned selling the military equipment.

Conclusion

If the PCs have the evidence from the warehouse showing Stymers' guilt in the theft of military supplies, the townspeople accept their help, and Private Zanphist comes forward (as described in A Town's Worst Fear). If, however, the PCs have no evidence of his guilt, none of the townspeople speak to the PCs anymore, regardless of what the PCs say. Everyone tells them to leave Fort Dolor and to head into the forest if they want to kill things.

4 Human Veterans (V) **Level 6 Soldier**
Medium natural humanoid XP 250 each

Initiative +5 **Senses** Perception +4
HP 70; **Bloodied** 35
AC 22; **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 17
Speed 5

⊕ **Longsword** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+11 vs. AC; 1d8 + 4 damage, and target is marked until the end of the human soldier's next turn.

⊕ **Dagger** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 5/10; +10 vs. AC; 1d4 + 3 damage.

Maneuvering Strike (standard; encounter) ✦ **Weapon**
The human veteran makes a longsword attack. If the attack hits, the human veteran makes a free secondary attack. *Secondary Attack:* +9 vs. Fortitude; 1d8 damage, and the human veteran can shift 1.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common
Str 18 (+7) **Dex** 14 (+5) **Wis** 12 (+4)
Con 14 (+5) **Int** 10 (+3) **Cha** 11 (+3)
Equipment scale armor, heavy shield, longsword, dagger

4 Dwarf Bolters (D) **Level 6 Artillery**
Medium natural humanoid (dwarf) XP 250 each

Initiative +7 **Senses** Perception +9; low-light vision
HP 58; **Bloodied** 29
AC 19; **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 16
Saving Throws +5 against poison
Speed 5

⊕ **Warhammer** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+9 vs. AC; 1d10 + 3 damage.

Crossbow (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 15/30; +11 vs. AC; 1d8 + 4 damage.

Aimed Shot
The dwarf bolter gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls and deals +1d6 damage with ranged attacks against creatures that don't have cover.

Stand Your Grand
When an effect forces a dwarf to move—through a push, pull, or slide—the dwarf moves 1 square less than the effect specifies. When an attack would knock the dwarf prone, the dwarf gains an immediate saving throw to avoid falling prone.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Dwarven
Skills Dungeoneering +11, Endurance +8
Str 14 (+5) **Dex** 18 (+7) **Wis** 12 (+4)
Con 16 (+6) **Int** 11 (+3) **Cha** 10 (+3)
Equipment chainmail, warhammer, crossbow with 20 bolts

2 Dire Boars (B) **Level 6 Brute**
Large natural beast (mount) XP 250 each

Initiative +3 **Senses** Perception +2
HP 85; **Bloodied** 42
AC 17; **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 16
Speed 8

⊕ **Gore** (standard; at-will)
+9 vs. AC; 1d10 + 4 damage, or 1d10 + 9 damage against a prone target.

Death Strike (when reduced to 0 hit points)
The dire boar makes a gore attack.

Rabid Charger (while mounted by a friendly rider of 6th level or higher; at-will) ✦ **Mount**
When it charges, the dire boar makes a gore attack in addition to its rider's charge attack; see also *furious charge*.

Furious Charge
When a dire boar charges, its gore deals +5 damage, pushes the target 2 squares, and knocks the target prone on a hit.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Str 19 (+7) **Dex** 10 (+3) **Wis** 9 (+2)
Con 15 (+5) **Int** 2 (-1) **Cha** 8 (+2)

Xeriope and Captain Revince

Encounter Level 8 (1,750 XP)

Setup

At some point, the PCs encounter Xeriope, Captain Revince, and her three spined devil lackeys at Phlen the herbalist's home and shop. This might occur while the investigation is in process, or it might occur after the PCs learn the truth. Xeriope is ready to run to the cavern at any moment, and she does so if the PCs show their intentions of taking her out of the house.

The map shows only two spined devils. The third is hiding in the back cavern. Don't place it on the map until the PCs enter that area, or during round 3 of a combat, at which point it emerges and joins the fray.

Xeriope (X)
Captain Revince (R)
3 spined devils (D)

If the characters enter this cavern, read:

A large, dark space opens up immediately beyond the door, and it smells damp and somewhat musty.

Tactics

Xeriope hides behind Revince while he attacks the PCs. He does everything in his power to keep the PCs away from her, assuming that the PCs are part of the "evil from the forest" that is coming to kill her. Xeriope uses her *charming kiss* against a PC only if Revince is knocked out of the combat. Otherwise she attempts to *dominate* PCs at range, or uses her *corrupting touch* on PCs in melee range.

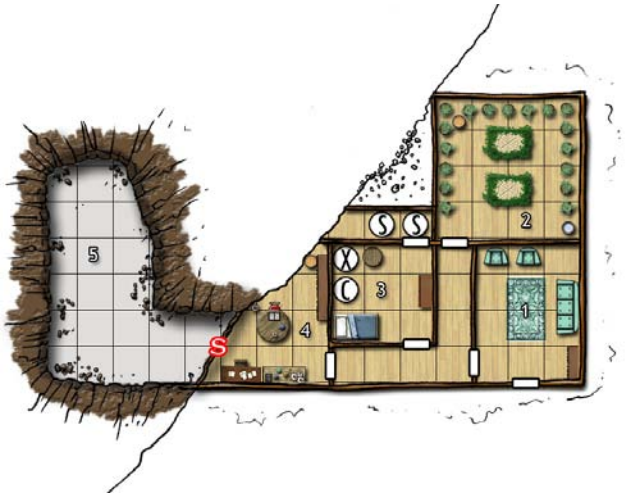
The spined devils try to use the small quarters use their *rain of spines* attack as much as possible, stepping into combat only if they must keep the PCs away from Xeriope. The third spined devil comes through Phlen's room and up the hallway to attack the PCs positioned at the back of the fight.

Xeriope runs for the cavern hidden behind a secret door in Phlen's room if the PCs show their intent to capture her, and she ensures that she is behind Revince while he attacks the PCs. He does everything in his power to keep the PCs away from her, assuming that the PCs are part of the "evil from the forest" that is coming to kill her. Xeriope uses her *charming kiss* against a PC only if Revince is knocked out of the combat. Otherwise she attempts to *dominate* PCs at range, or uses her *corrupting touch* on PCs in melee range.

The spined devils follow the PCs and use their rain of spines as much as possible—especially in the initial cramped quarters— and they step into combat only if they must keep the PCs away from Xeriope. The third spined devil remains positioned at the back of the fight.

Features of the Area

The bedroom where Xeriope is staying is sparsely furnished, with just a cot and a stool. The closet door is closed, and two of the three spined devils serving Xeriope hide in the closet. The third is hiding in a secret cave attached to Phlen's room, waiting to hear the call of its master.



Illumination: Light from various sources brightens the rooms, but the cavern is dark.

Treasure: Hidden in a satchel under Xeriope's cot (found with a DC 10 Perception check) is a grotesque statuette made of pure platinum worth 1,000 gp and a gem worth 700 gp. Also in the satchel is a crudely drawn map showing the way to Trilleste's shack near the entrance to the old dragon's lair. Written in Supernal on the map is "To the hag."

Conclusion

If the PCs defeat any of the devils without killing them, they are more than happy to tell the PCs about the infernal army. Although the devils do not reveal any more than this, at the DM's discretion (perhaps using a skill challenge) they can provide other information that might help the PCs in the battles at the lair.

Xeriope the Succubus (X) **Level 9 Controller**
Medium immortal humanoid (devil, shapechanger) XP 400

Initiative +8 **Senses** Perception +8; darkvision
HP 90; **Bloodied** 45
AC 23; **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 23
Resist 20 fire
Speed 6, fly 6

⊕ **Corrupting Touch** (standard; at-will)
+14 vs. AC; 1d6 + 6 damage.

⸸ **Charming Kiss** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Charm**
+14 vs. AC; on a hit, Xeriope makes a secondary attack against the same target. *Secondary Attack:* +12 vs. Will; the target cannot attack Xeriope, and if the target is adjacent to Xeriope when Xeriope is targeted by a melee or ranged attack, the target interposes itself and becomes the target of the attack instead. The effects last until Xeriope or one of its allies attacks the target or Xeriope dies.
If the target is still under the effect of this power at the end of the encounter, Xeriope can sustain the effect indefinitely by kissing the target once per day. Xeriope can affect only one target at a time with its *charming kiss*.

↛ **Dominate** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Charm**
Ranged 5; +12 vs. Will; the target is dominated until the end of Xeriope's next turn.

Change Shape (minor; at-will) ✦ **Polymorph**
The succubus can alter its physical form to take on the appearance of any Medium humanoid, including a unique individual (see Change Shape in *MM* 280).

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Supernal
Skills Bluff +15, Diplomacy +15, Insight +13
Str 11 (+4) **Dex** 18 (+8) **Wis** 19 (+8)
Con 10 (+4) **Int** 15 (+6) **Cha** 22 (+10)

Captain Revince (R) **Level 7 Elite Soldier**
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 600

Initiative +7 **Senses** Perception +4
HP 156; **Bloodied** 78
AC 24; **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 20
Saving Thows +2
Speed 5
Action Points 1

⊕ **Longsword** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+13 vs. AC; 2d8 + 5 damage.

⸸ **Knock Off Balance** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+13 vs. Reflex; 1d8 + 5 damage, and the target is immobilized until the end of Revince's next turn and target grants combat advantage to Revince (save ends).

⸸ **Jarring Strike** (standard; recharge 6) ✦ **Weapon**
Usable only if the target grants Revince combat advantage; +13 vs. Fortitude; 1d8 + 5 damage, and target is stunned (save ends).

Alignment Good **Languages** Common
Str 20 (+8) **Dex** 12 (+4) **Wis** 12 (+4)
Con 16 (+6) **Int** 10 (+3) **Cha** 11 (+3)
Equipment plate armor, heavy shield, longsword

3 Spined Devils (D) **Level 6 Skirmisher**
Medium immortal humanoid (devil) XP 250 each

Initiative +7 **Senses** Perception +10; darkvision
HP 70; **Bloodied** 35
AC 20; **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 16
Resist 20 fire
Speed 5, fly 7 (hover)

⊕ **Claws** (standard; at-will)
+11 vs. AC; 2d6 + 4 damage.

↛ **Rain of Spines** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Fire, Poison**
Ranged 10; the spined devil flings spines that ignite as they fly through the air; +9 vs. Reflex; 1d10 damage plus 1d6 fire damage, and the spined devil makes a secondary attack against the same target. *Secondary Attack*: +9 vs. Fortitude; the target takes ongoing 5 poison damage and is slowed (save ends both).

Alignment Evil **Languages** Supernal
Str 18 (+7) **Dex** 15 (+5) **Wis** 14 (+5)
Con 14 (+5) **Int** 10 (+3) **Cha** 11 (+3)

The Howling Hermit

Encounter Level 9 (2,100 XP)

Setup

Trilleste, the howling hag who initially opened the portal, works closely with Xeriope and Ichyrot to keep the area incapable of defending itself when the devilish army attacks. She took the form of a mysterious dwarf hermit, which allowed her to enter Fort Dolor and sow doubt and discord in the citizens there by spouting "prophecy." Now she bides her time at this mountainside abode, partially playing the role of a hermit, while at the same time acting as a guardian of the nearby lair entrance.

Trilleste (T)
1 ogre warhulk (W)
4 human cultist archers (A)

When the characters enter the chamber, read the following:

A roughly built home has been erected at the side of the mountain. The home is made of rough-hewn lumber and large stones, cobbled together. The home has no windows, and in lieu of a door is a crudely tanned piece of leather stretched across the doorway.

If the PCs announce themselves, Trilleste loudly calls for the PCs to enter, thereby warning her accomplices in the back of the house and giving them time to prepare an attack if needed. If the PCs sneak in and peek, or enter after announcing themselves, they see the following scene:

A filthy dwarf female dressed in rags sits in a rocking chair, staring absently into space. She at first does not appear to acknowledge your presence. Then she blinks rapidly, rocks in her chair faster and faster, and moans loudly. The moan turns into a shriek. Then she calms and says, "You are the strangers."

Tactics

Trilleste tries to trick the PCs into following her into the central room of her shack, where the archers can hit the PCs from all directions, and the ogre can attack them more easily. Trilleste does not hesitate to blast her allies with her *howl* or *shriek of pain* powers if she can get more enemies in the effect.

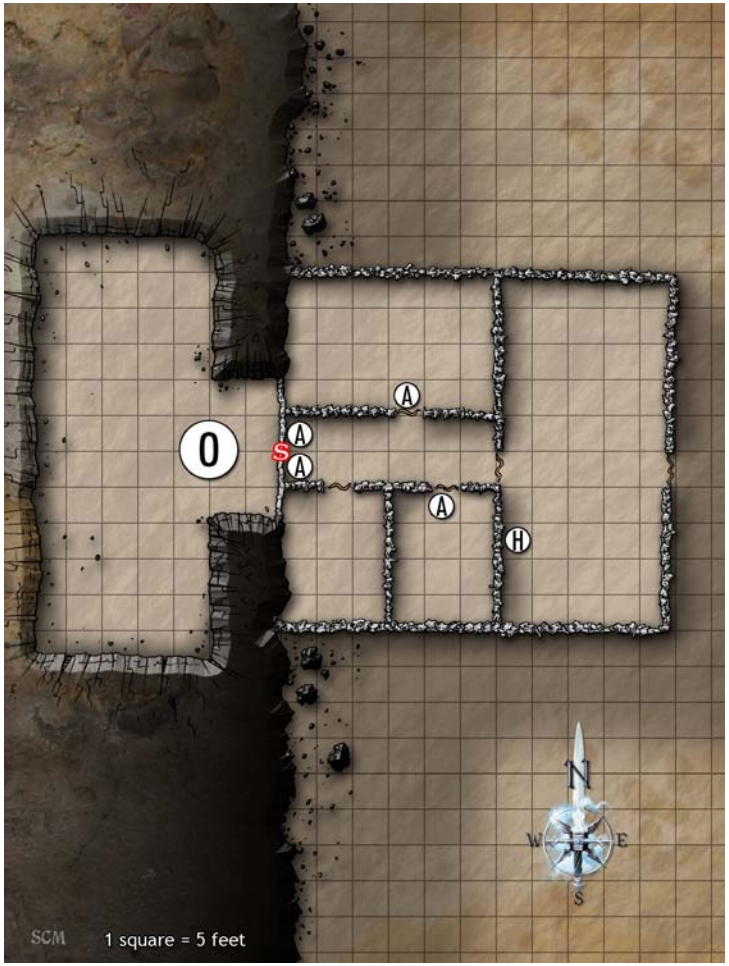
The archers snipe from the doorways, trying to stay away from the PCs' melee attacks.

The ogre bursts in at the first sign of combat, and he beats anything he can reach into a bloody pulp.

Features of the Area

The hag's shack is barely furnished in the living room and central hallway. Cots and chairs are in the other rooms for the cultists to use. None of the doorways contain doors; like the front entrance, leather hangings cover them. The hangings can be pulled open and closed as a minor action to provide cover for creatures attacking from behind them.

Illumination: Light from a lantern brightens the area.



Treasure: In the secret cave where the ogre stays are bodies of a few adventurers whom the ogre has killed recently. Most of the bodies have been picked clean of valuables, but one of the adventurers still wears a guardian shield (level 10) that was overlooked.

Conclusion

None of the cultists know the location of the lair and the portal, although they know it exists. The ogre knows nothing either, except the hag promised him lots of people to kill if he stayed with her.

Trilleste knows everything about the portal. She says as little as possible to the PCs, but they find notes on old parchment, written in Elven, describing that the mountains of this area contain many dark secrets, including a portal to a place of great evil. The notes say that the blood of a mortal being can open the portal. The notes describe landmarks of the area, so that the PCs can ascertain the portal is located near where the dragon used to live.

Ogre Warhulk (W) **Level 11 Elite Brute**
Large natural beast (mount) XP 1,200

Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +6
HP 286; **Bloodied** 143
AC 25; **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 21
Saving Throws +2
Speed 8
Action Points 1

Heavy Flail (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Reach 2; +14 vs. AC; 2d8 + 6 damage, and the target is knocked prone.

Flail Hurricane (standard; encounter) ✦ **Weapon**
Requires heavy flail; close burst 2; +12 vs. AC; 3d10 + 6 damage, and a Medium or smaller creature is knocked prone.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common, Giant
Str 22 (+11) **Dex** 12 (+6) **Wis** 12 (+6)
Con 23 (+11) **Int** 4 (+2) **Cha** 6 (+3)

Trilleste the Howling Hag (T) **Level 7 Controller**
Medium fey humanoid XP 300

Initiative +7 **Senses** Perception +10; low-light vision
Baleful Whispers (**Psychic**) aura 5; an enemy that ends its turn in the aura takes 1d6 psychic damage.
HP 83; **Bloodied** 41; see also shriek of pain
AC 21; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 18
Resist 10 thunder
Speed 6, see also *fey step*

Quarterstaff (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+9 vs. AC; 1d8 + 4 damage.

Howl (standard; at-will) ✦ **Thunder**
Close blast 5; +10 vs. Fortitude; 1d6 + 4 thunder damage, and the target is pushed 3 squares.

Shriek of Pain (standard; recharges when first bloodied) ✦ **Thunder**
Close blast 5; +8 vs. Fortitude; 3d6 + 4 thunder damage, or 3d6 + 9 thunder damage if Trilleste is bloodied. *Miss*: Half damage.

Change Shape (minor; at-will) ✦ **Polymorph**
Trilleste can alter her physical form to appear as an old crone of any Medium humanoid race (see Change Shape in *MM* 280).

Fey Step (move; encounter) ✦ **Teleportation**
Trilleste can teleport 10 squares.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Elven
Skills Bluff +11, Insight +10, Intimidate +11, Nature +10
Str 18 (+7) **Dex** 18 (+8) **Wis** 15 (+5)
Con 19 (+7) **Int** 12 (+4) **Cha** 16 (+6)

4 Human Cultist Archers (A) **Level 3 Artillery**
Medium natural humanoid XP 150 each

Initiative +7 **Senses** Perception +8
HP 38; **Bloodied** 19
AC 17; **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 13
Speed 6

Longsword (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+6 vs. AC; 1d8 + 2 damage.

Longbow (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 20/40; +9 vs. AC; 1d10 + 4 damage, and the cultist archer grants an ally within 5 squares of it a +2 bonus to its next ranged attack against the same target.

Cultist Hysteria (immediate reaction; when bloodied)
The cultist archer gets an immediate saving throw against any ongoing affects it might be suffering.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common
Str 14 (+3) **Dex** 19 (+5) **Wis** 10 (+1)
Con 15 (+3) **Int** 11 (+1) **Cha** 14 (+3)
Equipment leather armor, longsword, longbow with 20 arrows

Entry Guardians

Encounter Level 8 (1,750 XP)

Setup

A trap and creatures working for Ichyrot now guard the entrance chamber to the former lair of the white dragon. The owlbear was captured in the forest, and Xeriope decided that it could be trained to act as a guard for the lair. The flameskulls are undead servants of Ichyrot. The chain devil also placed a trap here, described below.

2 flameskulls (F)
1 owlbear (O)
1 hellfire spout (S)

When the characters enter the chamber, read the following:

The passage from the entrance leads into a large chamber. A strange creature the size of a large bear but sporting the feather and beak of a bird stands in the center of the chamber, apparently chewing on the half-eaten carcass of a deer. Bones litter the uneven floor around it.

On the north and south walls are bizarre red symbols, painted on in what could be blood. The symbols could be moving slowly. It is hard to tell. The chamber is uneven, with perches and platforms of various heights scattered around the room or carved into the walls.

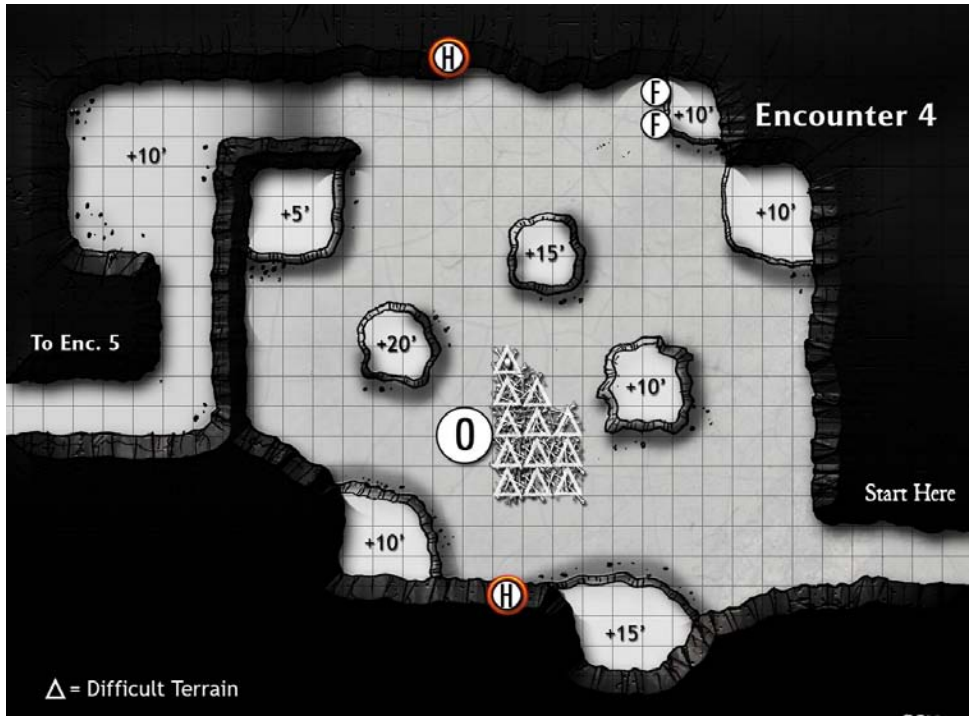
Despite the cold air filling the chamber, the northeastern edge of the chamber is slightly foggy. A tunnel ramping up in the northwest corner leads out of the chamber.

Tactics

The owlbear has been trained to attack anyone or anything that enters the chamber that does not whistle a particular musical phrase. It has attacked the flameskulls in the past, and it was seriously burned when it did so, meaning it now avoids attacking them. It also knows to avoid the squares that set off the hellfire trap.

The flameskulls prefer to stay out of melee and strike their foes with their ranged attacks. They have no great love for the owlbear, so they include it in area attacks if it seems tactically beneficial. They know about the hellfire spout trap, and they use that knowledge to their tactical advantage whenever possible.

The owlbear and flameskulls fight to the death. Once the creatures are defeated, the PCs can take the time to thoroughly search the area. In the northeast corner, on the ledge where the flameskulls rest most of the time, is their treasure.



Features of the Area

Illumination: Everburning torches illuminate the area.

Hellfire Spout Trap: The symbols on the walls are protective devices created by Ichyrot. They are described in the hellfire spout trap stat block.

Owlbear (O)	**Level 8 Elite Brute**
Large fey beast	XP 700
Initiative +6	**Senses** Perception +12, low-light vision
HP 212; **Bloodied** 106	
AC 22; **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 20	
Saving Throws +2	
Speed 7	
Action Points 1	
Claw (standard; at-will)	
Reach 2; +12 vs. AC; 2d6 + 5 damage.	
Double Attack (standard; at-will)	
The owlbear makes 2 claw attacks. If both claws hit the same target, the target is grabbed (until escape).	
Bite (standard; at-will)	
Grabbed target only; automatic hit; 4d8 + 5 damage.	
Stunning Screech (immediate reaction; when first bloodied; encounter)	
Close burst 1; +10 vs. Fortitude; the target is stunned (save ends).	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** –
Str 20 (+9)	**Dex** 14 (+6) **Wis** 16 (+7)
Con 16 (+7)	**Int** 2 (+0) **Cha** 10 (+4)

Perches and Platforms: The dwarves who lived here long ago created the perches and platforms in this area as a defensive measure. Artillery and magic wielders can rain attacks down on intruders. Rope ladders give them access to the tops of these areas. The ropes are no longer present, but the raised areas are still usable.

2 Flameskulls (F)	**Level 8 Artillery**
Small natural animate (undead)	XP 350 each

Initiative +7 **Senses** Perception +11
HP 70; **Bloodied** 35
Regeneration 5
AC 21; **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 21
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 fire, 5 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 5 radiant
Speed fly 10 (hover)

⊕ **Fiery Bite** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Fire**
+10 vs. AC; 1 plus 1d8 fire damage.

Flame Ray (standard; at-will) ✦ **Fire**
Ranged 10; +12 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 6 fire damage.

Fireball (standard; encounter) ✦ **Fire**
Area burst 3 within 20; +12 vs. Reflex; 3d6 + 6 fire damage. *Miss*: Half damage. The flameskull can exclude two allies from the effect.

Mage Hand (minor; at-will) ✦ **Conjuration**
As the wizard power *mage hand* (*Player's Handbook* 158).

Illumination
A flameskull sheds bright light out to 5 squares, but it can reduce its brightness to dim light out to 2 squares as a free action.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Supernal
Skills Stealth +12

Str 5 (+1)	**Dex** 16 (+7)	**Wis** 14 (+6)
Con 16 (+7)	**Int** 22 (+10)	**Cha** 20 (+9)

For the perches on the outside walls, a successful DC 18 Athletics check is required to reach them by climbing. The platforms atop the stalagmites are harder to reach, requiring a successful DC 26 Athletics check to reach by climbing.

The Bones: Several squares around the owlbear contain the bones of past feasts. Moving into these squares requires 2 squares of movement, and each square entered requires a successful DC 8 Acrobatics check. A failed check means the PC falls prone in that square, ending that movement.

Treasure: The flameskulls amassed a pile of coins totaling 600 gp.

Hellfire Spout	**Level 8 Blaster**
Trap	XP 350

Two bizarre symbols blast nonbelievers each round once triggered.

Trap: A blast of hellfire erupts from a symbol in a blaze of flame and heat.

Perception
No check is necessary to notice the symbols.

Trigger
When a character enters the blast area of one of the hellfire spouts, the trap makes its first attack as an immediate reaction. It then enters the initiative order directly after the creature that triggered it, attacking each round.

Attack
Immediate Reaction or Standard Action **Close blast 3**
Targets: Creatures in blast
Attack: +10 vs. Reflex
Hit: 3d8 + 4 fire damage and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).
Miss: Half damage, and no ongoing damage.

Countermeasures
- ✦ An adjacent character can delay one hellfire spout with a DC 21 Thievery check.
- ✦ An adjacent character can disable one hellfire spout with a DC 24 Thievery check.
- ✦ A character within 5 squares of a hellfire spout can disable it with a DC 21 Religion check.
- ✦ A character can attack a symbol with radiant damage (AC 18, other defenses 16; hp 70). Destroying the symbol disables the spout.

Vile Works

Encounter Level 10 (2,704 XP)

Setup

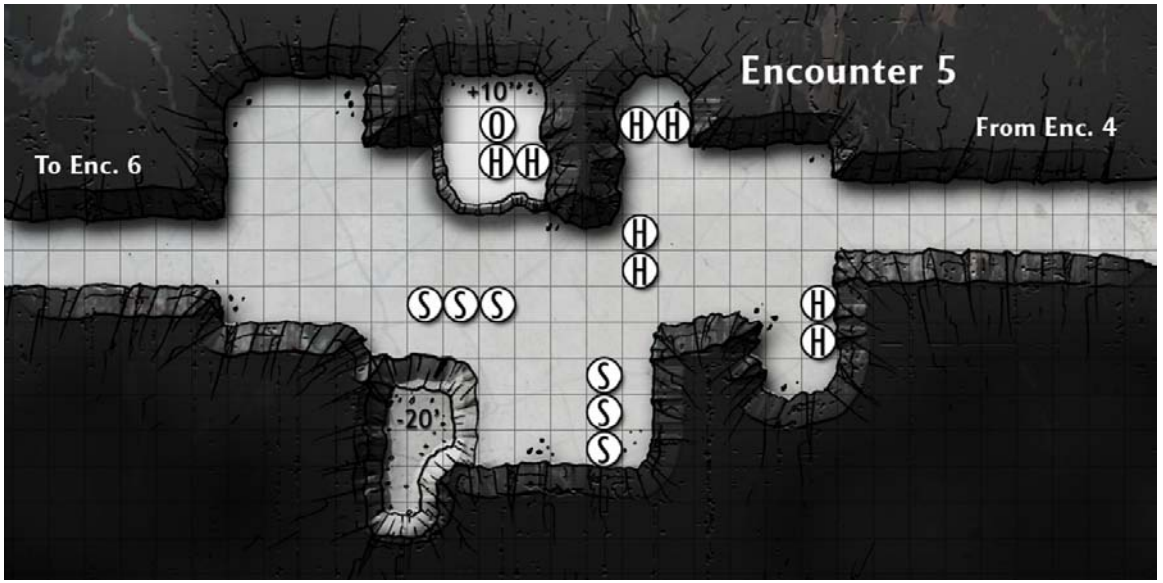
This chamber is being used to hold the soldiers until Ichyrot is ready to use them to fuel the planar portal to Dis. Human cultists of Dispater attend to the feeding and watering of the prisoners to keep them alive, while the spined devils act as guards. An oni night haunter named Urrgh, a native of this part of the world, joined forces with the devilish contingent, hoping that when the devils waged war here, he would be given a part of the area as a domain of his own.

1 oni night haunter (O)
6 spined devils (S)*
8 human cultists (H)

*If the PCs failed to find the lair quickly earlier in the adventure, add 2 spined devils to this encounter.

When the characters enter the chamber, read:

The passage from the entrance chamber leads up to this strangely shaped cavern. On the far side of the chamber, standing at attention, are several gangly creatures covered in spines. Long, wicked claws hang at the end of their spindly arms. Beyond these creatures is a pit. You believe you hear the sound of an occasional moan or murmur coming from the pit.



Tactics

The spine devils prefer to use their *rain of spikes*. If they must involve themselves in melee, they send three of them forward to provide protection to the other three, who can stay back and rain spikes at the biggest PC threat.

The human cultists throw themselves at the PCs in an attempt to protect the devils and the oni. They are fanatical, fighting to the death.

The oni is not as dedicated to the cause as the devils and the cultists. He attempts to use his *hypnotic breath* to put PCs to sleep, and then devour the soul of the PC who poses the biggest threat. If reduced to fewer than 35 hit points, the oni uses *gaseous form* and flees. If the battle went well for the creatures (half or more of the PCs were bloodied), the oni retreats to the portal room (detailed in the next encounter) to warn Ichyrot of the invasion. If the battle was one-sided in favor of the PCs, the oni does not tempt fate: He attempts to move far, far away from the lair to start anew.

If put into a position to do so, the oni might threaten to kill the prisoners if the PCs do not leave. However, this is a Bluff (DC 23 against the PCs' Insight). Ichyrot gave explicit orders that the soldiers should be kept alive, since they are needed to keep the portal open.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Everburning torches brighten the area.

The Pit: In the pit, bunched together like so many fish in a barrel, are some of the garrison soldiers from Fort Dolor, as well as farmers and loggers from the surrounding area. The walls of the pit are hard to climb, requiring a DC 22 Athletics check. The pit is 20 feet deep, but anyone falling into it takes only

1d10 damage because the fall is partially broken by the people in it.

If a PC falls into the pit, the prisoners here are willing to help him or her get out. With this help, the PC can add a +6 bonus to the Athletics check. On the other hand, if a cultist or spined devil is pushed into the pit, the prisoners pummel and kick their captors, dealing an extra 1d10 damage, in addition to the fall. After that, though, they move back and allow the creature to climb out without interference. A rope ladder is rolled up next to the pit. It can be unrolled and attached to spikes at the top of the pit with 2 move actions.

Treasure: The oni keeps a *symbol of victory* +2 as spoils from a good cleric whose soul it devoured.

Conclusion

If the creatures are defeated, the PCs can rescue the prisoners in the pit. All of them are well enough to climb out of the pit themselves (assuming the PCs lower the ladder). If the prisoners are asked to provide information on what else is in this lair, they can relate the following information:

- ✦ None of them have been to the chambers of the lair beyond this point. A couple of them did see creatures passing through, going up into the upper reaches of the lair. One creature that passed through looked like a devil for sure, with red, glowing eyes and leathery wings sprouting from its back.
- ✦ Five or six times a day, one of the spined creatures pulls a prisoner from the pit and sends the prisoner out of the chamber up the tunnel. None of those prisoners have been seen or heard since.

Oni Night Haunter (O) **Level 8 Elite Controller**
Large natural humanoid XP 700

Initiative +7 **Senses** Perception +5; darkvision
HP 180; **Bloodied** 90; see also *hypnotic breath*
AC 24; **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 22
Saving Throws +2
Speed 8, fly 8 (clumsy)
Action Points 1

⨁ **Morningstar** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Reach 2; +13 vs. AC; 1d12 + 5 damage, and a Medium or smaller target is pushed 1 square.

✧ **Hypnotic Breath** (standard; encounter; recharges when first bloodied) ✦ **Charm, Sleep**
Close blast 5, +11 vs. Will; target is dazed (save ends). *First Failed Save*: The target falls unconscious (no save).

⨽ **Devour Soul** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Healing, Psychic**
Affects an unconscious target only; +13 vs. AC; 2d10 + 4 psychic damage, and the oni haunter regains 10 hit points. This attack does not wake the unconscious target.

Deceptive Veil (minor; at-will) ✦ **Illusion**
The oni night haunter can disguise itself to appear as an elderly Medium or Large humanoid. A successful Insight check (opposed by the oni's Bluff check) pierces the disguise.

Gaseous Form (standard; sustain standard; encounter) ✦ **Polymorph**
The oni haunter becomes insubstantial and gains a fly speed of 8 (hover). It can enter and move through a porous obstacle that would otherwise prevent movement (such as a door or a cracked window) as if that space were extreme terrain. It remains in this form as long as it sustains the power.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Giant
Skills Bluff +13, Insight +10, Stealth +12, Thievery +12
Str 20 (+9) **Dex** 16 (+7) **Wis** 12 (+5)
Con 18 (+8) **Int** 12 (+5) **Cha** 18 (+8)

6 Spined Devils (S) **Level 6 Skirmisher**
Medium immortal humanoid (devil) XP 250 each

Initiative +7 **Senses** Perception +10; darkvision
HP 70; **Bloodied** 35
AC 20; **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 16
Resist 20 fire
Speed 5, fly 7 (hover)

⨁ **Claws** (standard; at-will)
+11 vs. AC; 2d6 + 4 damage.

✧ **Rain of Spines** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Fire, Poison**
Ranged 10; the spined devil flings spines that ignite as they fly through the air; +9 vs. Reflex; 1d10 damage plus 1d6 fire damage, and the spined devil makes a secondary attack against the same target. *Secondary Attack*: +9 vs. Fortitude; the target takes ongoing 5 poison damage and is slowed (save ends both).

Alignment Evil **Languages** Supernal
Str 18 (+7) **Dex** 15 (+5) **Wis** 14 (+5)
Con 14 (+5) **Int** 10 (+3) **Cha** 11 (+3)

8 Human Cultists (H) **Level 6 Minion**
Medium natural humanoid XP 63 each

Initiative +7 **Senses** Perception +5
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.
AC 22; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 18; see also *cultist fervor*
Speed 6

⨁ **Longsword** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+10 vs. AC; 4 damage.

Mob Rule
A human cultist gains a +2 power bonus to all defenses while at least two other human cultists are within 5 squares of it.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common
Str 19 (+7) **Dex** 14 (+5) **Wis** 14 (+5)
Con 15 (+5) **Int** 11 (+3) **Cha** 10 (+3)
Equipment chain armor, longsword

The Blood-Soaked Portal

Encounter Level 11 (3,200 XP)

Setup

This chamber holds the planar portal connecting this place to Dis, the second plane of the Nine Hells. Currently, the chain devil Ichyrot is using the captured garrison troops to perform a ritual: Every 4 hours a soldier is tossed into the portal, keeping the portal active, but undoubtedly dooming the soldier to a gruesome death on the other side. If the portal is held open long enough through continually feeding it mortals, Ichyrot believes the gate can be opened permanently, ensuring a constantly active two-way gate. This would leave little hope in avoiding a large devilish army invading the area.

Ichyrot (I)
4 cambion hellswords (C)*
8 hellguard legion devils (H)
Prisoner (Pr)

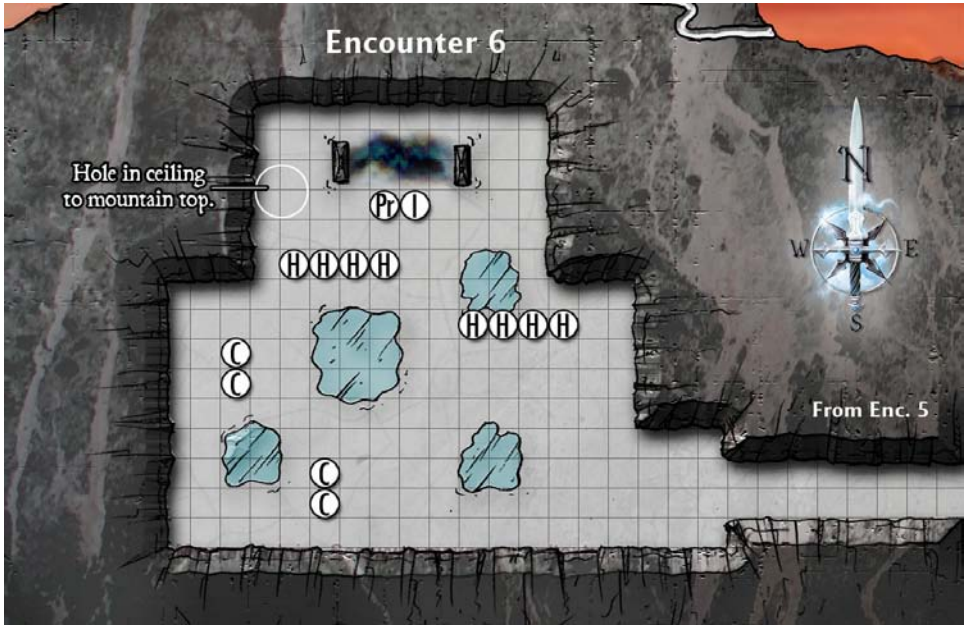
*If the PCs failed to find the lair quickly earlier in the adventure, add 1 cambion hellsword to this encounter.

When the characters enter the chamber, read the following:

Across the ice-covered chamber is a huge glowing screen of purple-black energy coursing back and forth between two obsidian pillars. Standing before the screen is a creature covered in jangling chains. The chains appear to slither and crawl over the creature's brown, wrinkled flesh. The chain creature holds a human wrapped in chains from the creature's body.

Also in the room are a number of creatures wearing black plate armor and wielding red longswords. Green fire glows in the eyes above a mouth full of sharp teeth. Other equally devilish creatures, sporting reddish horns and leathery wings, stand between you and the chain creature.

The chamber's ceiling is 40 feet above the floor, and an opening at the top of the chamber leads into the sky.



Tactics

The legion devils use their teleport ability to move into the back ranks of the PCs so that they can attack the softer targets. They attempt to act in tandem to make the best use of their *squad defense*. The cambions move into the best position possible to use their *whirlwind charge*. If they must, the cambions can fly out of melee range. The chain devil uses its first action (a standard action) to push the human prisoner through the portal, after which it moves to engage the PCs in combat.

All the creatures in this encounter rely heavily on melee attacks. Because of this, they attempt to overwhelm the PCs with brute force.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Everburning torches sit in iron sconces around the room, and daylight might shine from above.

Ceiling: The ceiling is 40 feet overhead.

Ice: Icy patches cover parts of the floors. Moving into these squares cost 2 squares of movement, and any creature that ends its movement or its turn in an icy square must make a successful DC 15 Acrobatics check or fall prone. Creatures moved into an icy square by someone else must also make this check or suffer the same consequences.

Portal: The portal is currently active, but only mortals who are bloodied can pass through the portal in its current state. Of course, no mortal in his or her right mind would want to pass through the portal. Any bloodied mortal or devil that enters the portal

spends 2 rounds traveling to Dis. Once there, the creature can re-enter the portal, spending another 2 rounds traveling back. If a mortal spends more than 2 rounds on Dis, he or she is attacked by a host of devilish creatures and killed. The PC should have the opportunity to see the devils approaching and thus have time to move back through the portal.

If a creature is pushed or slid through the portal by forced movement, the creature is allowed a saving throw. A successful save means the creature falls prone in front of the portal and grabs hold of something to prevent entry into the portal.

Treasure: The devils have looted 1,900 gp worth of coin, gems, and art objects from local victims.

Conclusion

If the devilish creatures are defeated, the PCs can investigate the portal. A successful DC 20 Arcana check allows the PCs to deactivate the portal on a temporary basis. It could still be activated from this side, but it could not be activated from creatures on Dis. A successful DC 30 Arcana check reveals how to eliminate the portal completely.

Ichyrot (Kyton) (I) **Level 11 Skirmisher**
Medium immortal humanoid (devil) XP 600

Initiative +14 **Senses** Perception +7; darkvision
HP 116; **Bloodied** 58
AC 25; **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 19
Resist 20 fire
Speed 7; see *dance of battle*

(+) **Spiked Chain** (standard; at-will)
Reach 2; +16 vs. AC; 2d4 + 7 damage.

+ **Double Attack** (standard; at-will)
Ichyrot makes two *spiked chain* attacks.

+ **Chains of Vengeance** (free, when first bloodied; encounter)
Ichyrot makes two *spiked chain* attacks.

+ **Hellish Chain** (standard; at-will)
+14 vs. Reflex; the target is wrapped in chains and restrained (save ends). Ichyrot can only use its chains to restrain one creature at a time.

Dance of Battle (minor; at-will)
Ichyrot shifts 1 square.

Dance of Defiance (immediate interrupt; when a melee attack is made against Ichyrot; recharges after Ichyrot uses *chains of vengeance*)
Ichyrot shifts 1 square.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Supernal
Skills Intimidate +11
Str 19 (+9) **Dex** 24 (+12) **Wis** 15 (+7)
Con 20 (+10) **Int** 14 (+7) **Cha** 13 (+6)

8 Legion Devil Hellguards (H) **Level 11 Minion**
Medium immortal humanoid (devil) XP 150 each

Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +6; darkvision
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.
AC 27; **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 22; see *squad defense*
Resist 10 fire
Speed 6, teleport 3

(+) **Longsword** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+16 vs. AC; 6 damage.

Squad Defense
The legion devil hellguard gain a +2 bonus to all defenses when adjacent to at least one other legion devil.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Supernal
Str 14 (+7) **Dex** 12 (+6) **Wis** 12 (+6)
Con 14 (+7) **Int** 10 (+5) **Cha** 12 (+6)
Equipment plate armor, heavy shield, longsword

4 Cambion Hellswords (C) **Level 8 Brute**
Medium immortal humanoid (devil) XP 350 each

Initiative +8 **Senses** Perception +7; darkvision
HP 106; **Bloodied** 53
AC 20; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 21
Resist 10 fire
Speed 6, fly 8 (clumsy)

(+) **Greatsword** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Fire, Weapon**
+10 vs. AC; 1d10 + 5 damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).

Whirlwind Charge
When a hellsword charges an enemy, it can make a greatsword attack against each enemy within its reach at the end of its charge.

Triumphant Surge
The hellsword gains 5 temporary hit points each time it bloodies an enemy or reduces an enemy to 0 hit points or fewer.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Supernal
Skills Athletics +13, Intimidate +14
Str 20 (+9) **Dex** 18 (+8) **Wis** 16 (+7)
Con 16 (+7) **Int** 10 (+4) **Cha** 21 (+9)
Equipment greatsword

About the Author

Shawn Merwin is a freelance writer, editor, and writing teacher. His latest work in the gaming industry includes two upcoming Wizards of the Coast® releases: *Dungeon Delve:* A 4th Edition D&D Supplement and *P3: Assault on Nightwyrm Fortress*. Shawn is currently the Global Administrator for the Western Hemisphere (North) in the RPGA's Living Forgotten Realms campaign. He lives in western New York, near the shores of Lake Erie, with his wife and daughter.

Dark Heart of Mithrendain

by Greg Marks

illustrations by Dave Allsop, Jim Nelson, and Anne Stokes

cartography by Kyle S. Hunter

Sunlight bathes the soaring towers of the eladrin city of Mithrendain. Gentle breezes swirl through wooded parks and along well-kept streets, and in the ancient settlement whose golden hues have seen it named the Autumn City, thousands live in peace and prosperity. For centuries, the fomorian chasms deep beneath the city have stood silent below the great magical seals that closed them in the waning days of the eladrin empire. Over long years, the folk of Mithrendain have forgotten the dark threats of old, becoming complacent in their tranquility. And so none suspect that corruption lurks at the heart of the city, spreading out from the shadows to taint all it touches.

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A month ago, Councilor Saffrenia, one of the city's leaders, began to see signs of corruption among some of her fellow members of the city's ruling council. However, her subsequent investigations have come to the attention of the dark figure behind that corruption, who has no qualms about killing Saffrenia before her suspicions spread. During an assassination attempt, the councilor's path crosses with that of a group of heroes from the mortal realm. Together, she and the PCs must venture into darkness, becoming hunter and hunted in a deadly chase in which the fate of the city hangs in the balance.

"The Dark Heart of Mithrendain" is an adventure for 12th-level PCs.

Adventure Background

The city of Mithrendain is a stunning jewel in the crown of the eladrin, and is detailed on in *Dragon* #366. Built around an ancient fortress meant to seal away the threat of assaults from the Underdark, the city has long been coveted by fomorian kings chafing at their failed history of conflict with the eladrin. One fomorian in particular, a brutal despot named Musagzi, has long set his sights on the Autumn City. However, rather than risk his forces on a frontal assault against Mithrendain's impressive defenses and arcane wards, the fomorian has decided to try a more subtle approach.

Dispatching the lamia Jelvistra on a mission to the city, Musagzi has charged her with corrupting and coopting Mithrendain's ruling council. By controlling the city's leadership, the fomorian hopes to weaken Mithrendain, eventually breaking the seals that will allow his forces to attack from the Underdark and raze the city.

Jelvistra poses as an eladrin noble recently arrived in Mithrendain. To maintain that cover, she rents luxurious apartments in the city, though she spends little time there. Deep beneath the citadel at the heart of Mithrendain, the lamia has shut down one of the city's mystic seals and opened up a passage to the Underdark, where she directs her careful plans to fruition.

Jelvistra has wasted no time getting close to four of Mithrendain's seven councilors. Unfortunately, the taint of corruption within the city's leadership has aroused the suspicions of Councilor Saffrenia Movrymm. Her quiet investigation threatens Jelvistra's plans, and has forced the lamia to send a force of assassins to end the councilor's threat. However, the threads of fate conspire to have Saffrenia's path crossed by a group of heroes from the mortal realm.

Adventure Synopsis

The PCs unintentionally end up in the Feywild city of Mithrendain, where they find themselves caught up with an eladrin councilor under attack by hired killers. Mistaken for allies of Saffrenia, the PCs find themselves fighting at her side. In the aftermath, their actions see them welcomed to Mithrendain as heroes.

Saffrenia can open a portal back to the mortal realm for the PCs—but first, she asks their aid. The corruption at the highest levels of government means that Saffrenia can trust no one—not even the city guards who should be the ones to investigate her allegations. As the PCs take part in a celebration at which they are unexpected guests of honor, they meet a number of councilors, clandestinely seeking evidence of their corruption on Saffrenia's behalf.

At the center of Saffrenia's suspicion stands Councilor Dresyae Tlathlyn, whose arrogance hides a deep-seated hunger for power. Through him, the PCs learn of a mysterious noble named Jelvistra and her connections to a number of those on the council.

Chief among Saffrenia's concerns are recent council directives to block off a number of the tunnels in the catacombs—a network of passages (some natural; some not) below the city. On the face of it, sealing off the catacombs seems like a positive security measure, but the manner in which the plans to do so were pushed through council without debate is what first aroused Saffrenia's suspicions.

Like all councilors, Dresyae wears a symbol of office that serves also as one of the keys to the great arcane seals beneath the city. However, the seal Dresyae wears is a fake, hinting at even more dangerous plots than Saffrenia has suspected.

Fearing that another assault on her life will come sooner than later, Saffrenia asks the PCs to accompany her as bodyguards to a meeting in the Old Battery. There, she seeks information and aid from a gang of young toughs and exiles. However, agents of Jelvistra get wind of the meeting and attack, forcing Saffrenia and the PCs to flee to the catacombs beneath the city.

There, the party and the councilor make a shocking discovery. The seal keyed to Dresyae's symbol of office has been shut down, a passage cut through from Mithrendain to the Underdark. Together, Saffrenia and the PCs descend deep into ancient fomorian caverns, braving deadly threats before facing off against the lamia herself, the fate of the city in the balance.

The Forces of Darkness

This adventure assumes that Jelvistra is an agent of the fomorian king Musagzi, whose plots are far reaching and likely as mad as he is. However, the force behind the lamia's attempt to corrupt Mithrendain can be customized according to the needs of your campaign.

Drow: No group loathes the eladrin more than their fallen cousins, the drow. As an agent of the dark elves, Jelvistra might seek to weaken the city in advance of an all-out assault. By reclaiming Mithrendain in the name of Lolth, the drow seek to use the city as a staging ground for attacks against other eladrin enclaves.

Infernal Cult: A group of the city's wealthy elite have turned away from the worship of Corellon in favor of patrons who offer more direct rewards. Hoping to sway the entire city to the worship of their dark masters, they have begun by corrupting Mithrendain's leaders.

The Far Realm: The strange behavior of the corrupted councilors hides a madness deeper than Saffrenia knows. Jelvistra is a tainted agent of the unspeakable beings that dwell in the Far Realm, and her control of Mithrendain is the first step in a twisted plan. By coopting the arcane resources of the city, she seeks to create a rift to the Far Realm that might destroy the Feywild.

Adventure Hooks

"The Dark Heart of Mithrendain" begins with the PCs hunting a goblin band before being transported to the Feywild. The party can be drawn into this preliminary action in a number of ways.

Helping the Little Guy: With their heroic reputations already well established, the PCs are approached by a group of local farmers and woodcutters. They ask the party to rout a group of goblins that have recently taken to raiding outlying villages and logging camps.

Villain's Trap: The party is on the trail of a villain—perhaps a foe who escaped from the PCs during a previous adventure. The PCs track down an underling who reveals that their foe is meeting with a group of goblin bandits that very night. However, the villain is using both the minion and the unwitting goblin thugs to draw the PCs into an area of the woods where he knows that a Feywild gate is set to open. If all goes according to plan, the PCs will find themselves lost in the Feywild, granting the villain revenge or putting them out of reach of interrupting his plans.

Bad Blood: For PCs who have a racial enmity for goblins or a history of conflict with their kind, the opening encounter can be worked into any routine travel. Whether the goblins undertake an ambush or are simply in the wrong place at the wrong time, the subsequent chase sees the party drawn into the Feywild.

The Dark Heart of Mithrendain

An initial running combat encounter sees the PCs snatched away from the mortal realm to the Feywild, where they are caught up in the plots threatening Mithrendain. Three encounters in the city (including a skill challenge) provide evidence of the extent of the council's corruption. When the PCs and Saffrenia flee to the catacombs, they find themselves descending deep into the lamia's lair and a final showdown.

Lost in Fog

The adventure begins as the party witnesses the goblins they have been tracking make a break for a nearby wood shrouded in fog.

After a half-day of tracking, you finally locate your quarry. A dozen goblins are on the run, breaking for mist-shrouded forest to your left as the moon crests a ridge behind you. A shout goes up from the goblins as you are spotted. Quickly, they race into the cover of the fog and the trees.

This introductory encounter takes the form of a running battle as the PCs chase the goblins into the fog. It is intended to be disorienting, and the characters will have to make concerted efforts to stay close together. The party starts 40 feet from the edge of the forest and the heavy mist shrouding the trees.

Fey Fog

While fighting in the forest, the party travels through an unusual fog created at the point of contact between the world and the Feywild. A DC 16 Nature check suggests that the thick fog bank is not naturally

Strangers in Town

Mithrendain is a city of the eladrin, and visitors of other races are rare. Unless the party consists entirely of eladrin or elves who can look the part, the PCs are going to draw an inordinate amount of attention from the folk of the city. Sometimes this is a positive benefit, as when word spreads of the otherworldly heroes who saved Saffrenia's life. In other cases (as when journeying to the Old Battery), it makes keeping a low profile all but impossible.

occurring, while a DC 21 Arcana check reveals that the fog is connected to the Feywild.

Creatures within the fog hear a mix of strange sounds—voices from an unseen market square, the howling of goblins, cartwheels on cobblestones, and the clash of steel on steel. If light sources are brought within the fog, shadows do not seem to fall properly. A PC in the fog sees things moving from the corner of his eye.

In the fog, all creatures and objects within 10 feet of each other have concealment. Creatures farther away have total concealment. Perception checks made to locate a creature by sight or sound take a –10 penalty. On a check that fails by 10 or more, characters believe that they see or hear what they seek in the wrong direction. If the PCs attempt to leave the area of the fog, it and its effect spread beyond the forest to hem them in.

Each turn that a PC moves and is not already in combat, roll 1d6 and consult the table below to see what he or she encounters in the fog. Add 1 to the roll for each previous round of combat, adjusting if the same result occurs repeatedly.

ROLL	RESULT
1	The character moves through an area filled with dangerous thorns. +10 vs. Reflex; 1d4 damage and the target is restrained. A PC can free himself the following round as a move action.
2	A frightened goblin warrior (*MM* 137) appears out of the mist and attacks the PC. The goblin flees if bloodied.
3	A hobgoblin soldier (*MM* 139) appears out of the mist, seeming disoriented and confused. It attacks the PC and fights to the death.
4	Strange shadows loom around the PC. +10 vs. Will; on a successful hit, the target grants combat advantage until the end of its next turn.
5	The PC brushes up against a tree and discovers that it is insubstantial. The PC must make a DC 21 Acrobatics check or stumble onto a cobblestone street that disappears after she falls. +10 vs. Fortitude; on a successful hit, the target is dazed (save ends).
6	The PC briefly hears the sounds of a marketplace all around. As suddenly as they came, the sounds fade.
7	The PC sees an eladrin peddler pulling a small cart through the mist. The peddler takes no heed of the character, disappearing as he moves behind a tree.
8	The PC finds her path blocked by a marble wall. Despite the cold fog of the forest, the stone is dry and warm to the touch, as though the sun had been shining on it.
9	The PC sees a goblin skullcleaver (*MM* 137) standing confused on a city street surrounded by surprised eladrin. The street fades from view as the eladrin scatter. The goblin sees the PC and attacks, fighting to the death.
10	An eladrin blackguard (see encounter M1, page 115) steps out of the mist and sees the PC, shouting "Treachery!" in Elven. He swings once at the PC (+17 vs. AC; 1d8 + 6 damage, then fades away into the mist.
11	The PC hears voices shouting in Elven as a woman shouts in defiance. The voices surround the PC, but no one is there.
12	The mists recede and all the PCs are standing in the middle of a sunny marketplace. The party has crossed into the Feywild and the goblins are gone.

Award the PCs full experience for any goblins they defeat, though this initial fight should not prove a significant challenge.

Encounter M1: A Timely Rescue

Pulled from the mortal realm to a Mithrendain market, the PCs break up an assassination attempt and find themselves caught up in a plot that threatens the city.

Tactical Encounter: "A Timely Rescue" (page 115).

Saffrenia's Favor

Moments after the fight ends, two squads of city guards arrive on the scene. Shouting challenges, they immediately move to surround the PCs, but Saffrenia stops them in their tracks.

"These visitors are welcome to Mithrendain and under my protection. Their timely arrival in our realm and their bravery are the only reason I am alive to speak to you." From within her cloak, the woman pulls a golden amulet on a chain, its face inscribed with Elven glyphs.

Upon seeing the symbol, the leader of the guards motions his troops to drop their weapons. "Councilor Saffrenia," he says, bowing. "My apologies to you and your companions. What happened here?"

Saffrenia tells the guards that she was attacked by common thugs, a sidelong glance to the PCs

indicating that she wishes to stick to that story. As the guards take any bodies or prisoners away, the PCs find themselves the center of attention among the guards and bystanders alike. Though many of the eladrin are clearly intimidated by characters of other races, word that the PCs have saved a beloved city councilor quickly spreads.

Saffrenia quietly whispers that you need to talk. Then loud enough for the crowd to hear, she says: "Before the attack, I was on my way to a council celebration. I would be honored if my saviors would join me."

Saffrenia leads the party away from the market. Though the PCs continue to draw gawkers, the eladrin give them a wide enough berth for Saffrenia to quietly speak.

"I have lived in Mithrendain all my life, and have been privileged to serve the city as a councilor for many years. Recently, however, I have grown to suspect that a kind of corruption festers at the heart of the council—corruption that might extend into the city guard as well. For a month now, I have been making inquiries into the actions of certain of my fellow councilors. You saw the results in the marketplace just now."

If the PCs ask about the portal that brought them here, Saffrenia tells them she knows it.

"It is an ancient gate that activates rarely and always of its own accord. However, I have some small power with such things. I can activate the gate to allow you to return to your realm. But before you go, I would beg a favor of you."

The attack on Saffrenia's life confirms her fears of corruption within the council. However, she has yet to discover concrete evidence of that corruption, and is afraid to take her concerns to the other councilors until she knows who among them has been tainted. Saffrenia is sure that another attack is imminent, and she needs protection and allies she can trust while she searches for the evidence she needs. She asks the PCs to aid her in her effort to expose the darkness in her city.

Quest XP: Defending Saffrenia and destroying the threat to the city is a major quest worth 3,500 XP and a 5,000 gp honorarium that Saffrenia promises the PCs.

Encounter M2: The Council Celebration

For their role in saving Councilor Saffrenia, the PCs are welcomed as heroes at an eladrin celebration. There, they have a chance to look for evidence of the corruption Saffrenia sees in the other members of the council.

Tactical Encounter: "The Council Celebration" (page 117).

Midnight Rendezvous

Armed with the information gathered by the PCs, Saffrenia leads them to a warehouse in the Old Battery. Her meeting there is with the Crimson Outcasts, a band of thieves and exiles. Saffrenia fears that the corruption in the council might have already spread to the leadership of the city guard and the Watchers of the Night (Mithrendain's secret police). She needs to know what the outcast community has heard and seen.

The Old Battery is one of the seamier wards of Mithrendain, named for the line of towers that stood beside the original fortress from which the city has grown.

Through back alleys and empty streets, Saffrenia leads you to the Old Battery. The eladrin you pass are shabbily dressed, watching you with the same intensity you witnessed in the celebration. However, you hear more muttered oaths and even a few threats of violence along these darker streets.

At a decrepit warehouse with grime-streaked windows, Saffrenia stops. The street around you is deserted except for two figures lurking in the shadows to either side of the door. They nod as she enters. Within, the walls are lined with stacks of dusty boxes, younger eladrin wearing crimson armbands standing before them. They watch you with a predatory gaze, a young male in black leather stepping into the center of the room as the others close around you.

Saffrenia smiles, "It is good to see you Illianter."

"And you my lady," the boy responds with a wary but deferential bow. "I never expected to see one of your station in the exiles' quarter, and in the company of outworlders, no less. What do you want?"

Saffrenia fills the Crimson Outcasts in on the events of earlier in the day, and tells Illianter what her fears of corruption in the council, the guard, and the Watchers. Illianter eyes the party warily as the councilor speaks, but a DC 16 Diplomacy check from the PCs can help convince him that Saffrenia speaks the truth.

"We've been keeping a close eye on the operations sealing the catacombs. These tunnels have always been our way to travel freely under the city. At first, we assumed the council was trying to flush us out to the streets where they could keep an eye on us. The more we look, though, the more it seems there's something else going on. It's only some of the catacombs being sealed, and not even those that see the most use."

Before Saffrenia and Illianter can do anything but compare notes, the meeting is attacked.

Encounter M3: Quickling Ambush

A force of quicklings bursts in on the meeting with the Crimson Outcasts, with deadly results.

Tactical Encounter: "Quickling Ambush" (page 120).

A Moment's Respite

To escape pursuit, Saffrenia takes the PCs into the catacombs, leading them from the Old Battery toward the Citadel. Eventually, the characters find themselves at the junction of a number of rough passageways trickling with rainwater runoff.

The route Saffrenia takes you along seems sure to lose any potential pursuit. The catacombs of Mithrendain are a maze of ancient tunnels and side passages, most long disused by the look of it. Though some are rough stone, others are finished passageways showing the elegant style of the city above.

Eventually, you find yourselves in a wide cavern with ledges surrounding a central pool fed by trickling rainwater runoff. Glowing moss covers the ceiling, filling the area with dim light.

Saffrenia suggests that this chamber is a good place to rest. This area is near one of the secret entrances leading from the catacombs into the Citadel. Though the air here is faintly musty, the chamber is clean and safe. The party can take an extended rest at this point.

The assault at the warehouse tells Saffrenia that her foes are even closer than she realized. In addition, those foes will be hunting the party now. Saffrenia fears that the reach of those behind the corruption of Mithrendain might extend even to the mortal realm.

If the PCs cannot help her discover who is behind the threat, the characters might well find themselves hunted even after returning home.

L1: The Hunt Begins

As they try to get to safety, the PCs find themselves descending deep into the lamia's lair. Saffrenia's plan is to lead the party through the catacombs and to the

Within, you see a chamber unlike anything else you have seen so far belowground. A large room of worked stone has a glowing circle set upon the floor...

Citadel. There, she hopes to find Flaeorn Marnon and the other councilors not yet corrupted, convincing them to take a stand against the others.

Unless noted otherwise, all of the areas in the lamia's complex are dark.

As you make your way along more twisting passageways, you see signs of the work the Crimson Outcasts described. Many passages have been blocked off by new stonework, Saffrenia taking you on a circuitous route toward the lower reaches of the Citadel.

Along a finished stone corridor, Saffrenia slows to feel her way along the wall. You hear the click of a hidden catch, and a concealed door swings wide.

Within, you see a chamber unlike anything else you have seen so far belowground. A large room of worked stone has a glowing circle set upon the floor, but the far half of the chamber is piled high with sandy soil. A glistening amber resin lines a tunnel cut through the mound that has disrupted the circle. Five eladrin soldiers in chainmail lie dead before it, vines and mushrooms sprouting from their corpses.

Saffrenia is visibly shocked at what she sees. If the PCs ask her what it means, she answers truthfully that she does not know. The magic circle is one of the seals protecting Mithrendain, apparently breached by the creatures of the Underdark it was meant to protect against. This seal was the one keyed to Dresyae's missing symbol of office. (If the PCs did not determine that Dresyae's symbol was missing, the broken seal implies that the corrupt councilor is involved, one way or another.)

Saffrenia has the proof she sought of the threat to Mithrendain, but that proof might have come too late. She and the PCs must now enter the breach in order to find Dresyae's symbol of office and close the seal once more.

The breach shows signs of recent digging, and the resin is covered in dripping slime. The light of the magic circle flickers as it slowly dies.

The PCs have found the route opened by the lamia Jelvistra into the fomorian realm. The hole in the ground is 10 feet across. No light emanates from within.

A DC 16 Heal check made to investigate the bodies suggests that the eladrin guards were killed by some kind of insect swarm (Jelvistra's *devouring swarm*), and that they have been dead approximately two weeks. (Jelvistra has used Dresyae's influence with the Citadel Guard to ensure that no new patrols pass through this area.)

A DC 21 Nature check reveals that the vines entwining the corpses are not natural. A DC 21 Arcana check suggests they are infused with strange energy from the Feywild's Underdark.

The resin that lines the tunnel is solid beneath its coating of slime. A DC 16 Nature check identifies it as some sort of insect resin, though whether the breach was dug by a single enormous creature or a swarm of smaller ones remains unknown.

1D6	BOON/CURSE
1	***Sharpened Senses:*** Gain low-light vision. If you already have low-light vision, gain a +2 bonus to Perception checks. ***Clouded Eyes:*** Take a -2 penalty to Perception checks.
2	***Mobile:*** Once per encounter as a free action, ignore difficult terrain when shifting. ***Weight of Greed:*** Your speed is reduced by 1 (minimum 1).
3	***Spirit of War:*** Once per encounter as a free action, gain a +1 bonus to attack rolls with a longsword, longbow, or shortbow. ***Untimely Fumble:*** The first time you make a successful attack in an encounter, you must reroll and take the second result if it is lower.
4	***Lucky:*** Gain a +1 bonus to your next saving throw. ***Unlucky:*** Take a -1 penalty to your next saving throw.
5	***One with the Feywild:*** Gain the ability to use fey step (*PH* 38) as a daily power. ***Bumbling:*** Take a -2 penalty to all skill checks.
6	***Fortune Smiles:*** You find a 1,000-gp gem in your pocket. This gem does not disappear after an extended rest. ***Fate Takes Away:*** The item taken from the wishing pool and two other magic items disappear from the character's possession. After an extended rest, the two items (but not the item from the pool) return.

L2: Deadly Garden

The route the lamia has opened up to the ancient fomorian caverns passes through a garden protected by a pair of voracious shambling mounds.

Tactical Encounter: "Deadly Garden" (page 122).

L3: The Hatchery

This area has been set up by Jelvistra for the creation of a force of banshrae warriors.

Large trees fill this warm cavern, their bark covered with clinging lichen and a strange black substance. Softly glowing cocoons are nestled between the roots of the trees, their soft shells moving.

Two dozen cocoons, each the size of a small dog, drip a softly glowing amber resin similar to that lining the tunnel in area 1. A DC 21 Arcana check reveals that the cocoons contain the young of some insectoid fey creature.

If a callous PC breaks open one of the eggs (a move that Saffrenia opposes), a small humanoid with insectoid features and no mouth is seen inside. A DC 21 Arcana check identifies it as a banshrae. The immature creature quickly dies.

The bark of the trees has been replaced by black chitin, resembling an insect's shell.

L4: The Wishing Pool

An ancient pool is imbued with fey magic that Jelvistra has so far been afraid to tamper with.

The buzz of insects fills the air in this dark cave, dominated by a pool filled with pale lily pads. In the center of the pool stands a statue of a laughing eladrin child, his hands extended as if to receive something.

The wishing pool radiates magic (Arcana DC 16), though its purpose is not immediately clear. A successful DC 21 Perception check notices several items on the bottom of the pool. The water is clear and clean, and the PCs can retrieve the items easily enough. However, Saffrenia warns them that taking without giving is often punished in the fey world.

For each item a PC takes from the pool, he or she must throw items of equal value back in (to within 20 percent, at your discretion). If this is done, no ill effect occurs. If something is thrown into the pool and nothing is taken, a PC finds herself the subject of a random boon upon leaving the area. If something is taken and nothing is given, a PC finds himself targeted by a random curse when leaving the area. Boons and curses last until the PC takes an extended rest. A PC can only be affected by one boon, but he

Just Rewards

For their efforts in this adventure, the PCs are made Companions of Mithrendain, and they are always welcome in the eladrin city. In addition, Saffrenia and the remaining council members can bestow any of the following rewards upon the PCs, at your discretion.

Dresyae Tlathlyn's Estate: If he survived, Dresyae stands trial and is sent into exile. If the PCs are inclined to stay in the Feywild for a time, the new council finds it only fitting that the outsiders who risked their lives to save the city be granted Dresyae's estate. In addition to providing a base of operations, hidden rooms in the basement or journals in Dresyae's personal library might lead the PCs to future adventures.

Saffrenia's Ritual Book: Saffrenia shares the ritual that allows her to reopen the planar gate through which the PCs can return home.

Planar Key

The air shimmers as the scene around you is replaced by a wholly different location. A gateway opens as the boundary between two worlds fades.

Level: 13
Category: Travel
Time: 10 minutes
Duration: Special
Component Cost: 200 gp
Market Price: 1,000 gp
Key Skill: Arcana

This ritual allows you to activate an existing permanent link between two planes. It otherwise functions as the Linked Portal ritual.

At the DM's discretion, specific permanent planar portals might only be operational at certain times.

At the completion of this ritual, make an Arcana check. The result determines the duration that the portal remains open.

Arcana Check Result	Portal Duration
19 or lower	1 round
20–39	3 rounds
40 or higher	5 rounds

Titles and Patronage: Cleaning out the full extent of the corruption in the city will take time. To aid in that effort, Saffrenia and the council name the PCs as Summer Knights of the Yellow Rose, empowering them to act as the council's agents. The Mithrendain council can act as a patron of the PCs in future adventures.

or she incurs one curse for each item taken. Consult the table to determine the results based on the characters' actions.

The following items can be found on the bottom of the pool: three 1,000-gp emeralds, a silver piece, a key ring containing keys to areas 7, 8 and 9), a pair of *goggles of night*, and an *amulet of protection* +3.

L5: Selnarine's Lair

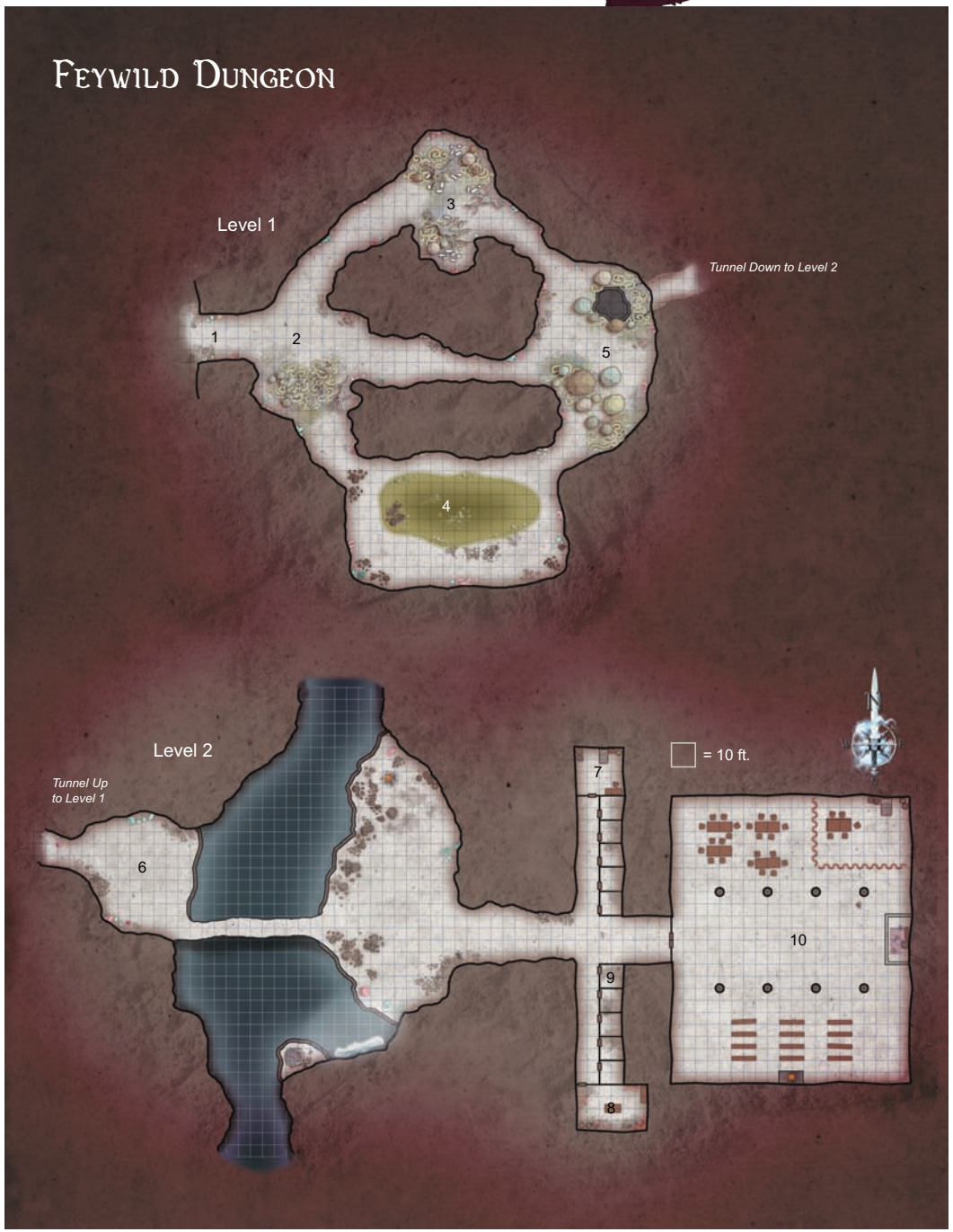
A briar witch dryad oversees Jelvistra's banshrae breeding program and guards the entrance to the fomorian caverns.

Tactical Encounter: "Selnarine's Lair" (page 123).

Saffrenia

While she accompanies the PCs, Saffrenia fights alongside them. However, despite her level and her powers, she remains a politician, not a warrior. While she is willing to put her life on the line alongside the PCs, she is more likely to use *healing touch* or *autumn's lure* from the sidelines, reserving her *gust of the frozen north* for dire emergencies. It is important that Saffrenia never steals the spotlight from the PCs.

Saffrenia Movrymm	**Level 13 Controller (Leader)**
Medium fey humanoid, eladrin	XP 800
Initiative +8 **Senses** Perception +8; low-light vision	
HP 122; **Bloodied** 61	
AC 27; **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 25, **Will** 27	
Saving Throws +5 against charm effects	
Speed 6; see also *fey step*	
⨺ **Staff** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+18 vs. AC; 1d6 + 6 damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).	
⤙ **Gust of the Frozen North** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold**	
Ranged 10; +17 vs. Fortitude; 2d8 + 6 cold damage, and ongoing 5 cold damage (save ends).	
⤙ **Autumn's Lure** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Charm**	
Ranged 10; +17 vs. Will; the target slides 5 squares.	
Healing Touch (minor; encounter) ✦ **Healing**	
With a touch, Saffrenia allows the target to spend a healing surge and regain an additional 2d6 hit points.	
Fey Step (move; encounter) ✦ **Teleportation**	
Saffrenia can teleport 5 squares.	
Alignment Good	**Languages** Common, Elven
Skills Arcana +14, Bluff +11, Diplomacy +11	
Str 10 (+6)	**Dex** 15 (+8) **Wis** 14 (+8)
Con 10 (+6)	**Int** 16 (+9) **Cha** 11 (+6)
Equipment robes, staff	



L6: Waterfall Bridge

This ancient cavern has been reoccupied by a force of cyclopses in advance of the coming fomorian invasion.

Tactical Encounter: "Waterfall Bridge" (page 125).

L7: Cells

Beyond the cavern, the rough passage walls turn to worked stone. A line of barred cells fills a wide hall. Within the closest cell, you see scattered bones, rags, and bloodstained manacles fixed to the stone.

The cells are intended for the torture and questioning of eladrin prisoners. Though only a few have seen use so far, Jelvistra hopes that will change soon. The door to each cell is locked (Thievery DC 30, Strength DC 21), but one of the keys found in the wishing pool (area 4) opens them.

L8: Dresyae's Quarters

The door to the northern room is locked (Thievery DC 30, Strength DC 21), but one of the keys found in the wishing pool (area 4) opens it.

This worked stone chamber is furnished with a thick red carpet, a comfortable bed, and an elegant desk. A banner depicting the coat of arms of Mithrendain hangs on the wall.

This chamber is used by Dresyae when he visits Jelvistra. Any search of the desk turns up documents and diaries revealing that he means to eventually betray Jelvistra and seize the city for himself.

In a hidden drawer of the desk (Perception DC 21), the PCs find a ring decorated in sapphires worth 2,000 gp.

L9: Torture Chamber

The door to this room is locked (Thievery DC 30, Strength DC 21), but one of the keys found in the wishing pool (area 4) opens it.

Instruments of torture fill this chamber. A rack sits at center with a steaming vat of acid behind it. An array of knives and picks hangs on the northern wall next to an iron maiden. To the southwest is some sort of covered pit.

Beneath the wooden planks that cover the pit, the PCs find the remains of five eladrin (including city guards) who have been tortured and slain at the hands of Dresyae and Jelvistra.

L10: The Lamia's Lair

In her great throne room, Jelvistra puts her plots for the fall of Mithrendain into action.

Tactical Encounter: "The Lamia's Lair" (page 127).

Conclusion

Once the PCs have defeated Jelvistra and her defenders, a thorough search of her sanctum reveals the full extent of the lamia's plots for opening access to the Underdark beneath the city. The evidence the PCs and Saffrenia collect will clearly establish who on the council has been corrupted, and which councilors remain true to Mithrendain.

When the PCs have finished with Jelvistra and her servants, they make their way back through the Underdark tunnels without incident, returning to the chamber with the broken seal. With Dresyae's symbol of office, Saffrenia is able to activate the seal once more and close off the passage to the caverns below.

Saffrenia calls an emergency meeting of the city council, with the PCs in attendance. When the evidence is presented, the corrupted councilors (including Dresyae if he was left alive) confess and are taken into custody. Arrest orders are issued for the corrupt agents within the guard.

When the PCs are ready to leave Mithrendain, Saffrenia gives them her final thanks, then performs the ritual that opens the gate to take them home.

Instruments of torture fill this chamber. A rack sits at center with a steaming vat of acid behind it. An array of knives and picks hangs on the northern wall next to an iron maiden.

A Timely Rescue

Encounter Level 12 (3,500 XP)

Setup

4 eladrin blackguards (G)
1 eladrin twilight enforcer (E)
Saffrenia (S)

Once the party has crossed into the Feywild, they find themselves in the middle of a market square. Farmers and shoppers huddle behind produce carts in the midst of a street brawl. Several eladrin males with swords drawn are attempting to surround a female eladrin defending herself with a staff. Seeing the PCs suddenly appear as if by magic, the eladrin assassins assume them to be allies of Saffrenia and attack.

Tactics

The eladrin blackguards each issue a *Feywild challenge* to different PCs in an effort to prevent attacks against the twilight enforcer. They position themselves to use their *harvest's sorrow* power to protect the twilight enforcer, allowing him to direct the fight in their favor.

The twilight enforcer uses *binding bolt* against the strongest-looking melee combatants, giving the blackguards combat advantage against immobilized foes. He uses *teleporting bolt* against a spellcaster or ranged combatant trying to stay out of melee, dropping them where the guards can attack. He reserves *dazzling blast* until he can target two or more PCs.

These assassins ignore all threats or offers of parley. They do not surrender (knowing that Jelvistra will have them killed if they are captured). However, if at least three of them are dead or unconscious and the other two are bloodied, the survivors flee.

Features of the Area

Bystanders: Thirteen eladrin bystanders (labeled 'B' on the tactical map) have moved to the edges of the square, taking shelter in doorways, alleys, or under sellers' carts. The assassins focus their attacks exclusively on the PCs, but if any bystanders are attacked (including being caught in the PCs' area attacks), treat them as minions with AC 12, Fortitude 11, Reflex 12, and Will 11.

Stalls and Carts: Market stalls and vendors' carts selling produce and flowers, milk and cheese, and a wide variety of handicrafts are set up across the market square. A cart is tall enough that a Small creature can move under it and gain cover. It costs 2 squares of movement to hop up onto a cart. A character can make a DC 10 Strength check to tip over a cart, which then grants superior cover. A cart that is tipped over spills its contents in a 2-square-by-2-square area that becomes difficult terrain.

Ending the Encounter

Once the assassins are overcome, the remaining bystanders react in fear to the PCs. A few run for help or shout for the city guard. The eladrin woman introduces herself as Saffrenia and thanks the PCs for intervening on her behalf. If the PCs are inclined to flee before the guards arrive, Saffrenia smiles and tells them to wait.

Eladrin Twilight Enforcer (E) Level 12 Controller
Medium fey humanoid XP 700

Initiative +9 **Senses** Perception +7; low-light vision
HP 114; **Bloodied** 57
AC 26; **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 25, **Will** 25
Saving Throws +5 against charm effects
Speed 6; see also *fey step*

⊕ **Spear** (standard; at will) ✦ **Weapon**
+14 vs. AC; 1d8 + 3 damage, and the target is slowed until the end of the eladrin twilight enforcer's next turn.

↗ **Binding Bolt** (standard; at will)
Ranged 10; +16 vs. Reflex; 1d8 + 5 damage, and the target is immobilized until end of the eladrin twilight enforcer's next turn.

↗ **Teleporting Bolt** (standard; at will) ✦ **Teleportation**
Ranged 10; +16 vs. Reflex; 1d8 + 4 damage, and the target is teleported up to 3 squares. The target cannot be teleported into an unsafe space.

✧ **Dazzling Blast** (standard, recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Radiant**
Close blast 3; +13 vs. Will; 2d6 + 5 radiant damage, and the target is blinded until the end of the eladrin twilight enforcer's next turn.

Fey Step (move; encounter) ✦ **Teleportation**
The eladrin twilight enforcer can teleport 5 squares.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Elven
Skills Arcana +18, History +18, Nature +12
Str 12 (+7) **Dex** 16 (+9) **Wis** 12 (+7)
Con 10 (+6) **Int** 20 (+11) **Cha** 16 (+9)
Equipment robes, spear

Development

The assassins have the look of common street thugs, though their tactics and weapons indicate otherwise. Their attack on Saffrenia was intended to look like a robbery gone bad.

If the PCs attempt to capture any of the assassins for later questioning, Saffrenia discourages them. She quietly says that these killers have been sent by powerful foes that might have connections to the city guard. If the guards see them take a prisoner, it might lead to an even more deadly encounter.

4 Eladrin Blackguards (B) Level 12 Soldier (Leader)
Medium fey humanoid XP 700

Initiative +14 **Senses** Perception +7; low-light vision
Feywild Tactics aura 10; fey creatures in the aura score a critical hit on a roll of 19 or 20 (a roll of 19 is not an automatic hit, however).
HP 117; **Bloodied** 58
AC 28; **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 22
Saving Throws +5 against charm effects
Speed 5; see also *fey step*

⊕ **Short Sword** (standard action; at will) ✦ **Weapon**
+19 vs. AC; 1d10 + 8 damage.

⸸ **Stab of the Entangling Wild** (standard action or opportunity attack; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Weapon**
Requires longsword; +17 vs. AC; 3d8 + 8 damage, and target is restrained until the end of the eladrin blackguard's next turn. The eladrin blackguard cannot attack with its longsword while target is restrained.

↗ **Feywild Challenge** (standard; encounter)
Ranged 10; the target is marked until the end of the encounter or until the eladrin blackguard dies, taking 6 damage each round it does not attack the eladrin blackguard.

Fey Step (move; encounter) ✦ **Teleportation**
The eladrin blackguard can teleport 5 squares.

Harvest's Sorrow (immediate reaction, when ally within 5 squares of the eladrin blackguard is damaged; at-will)
Half the attack's damage is negated, and the eladrin blackguard takes the other half.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Elven
Skills Athletics +15, Arcana +10, History +10, Nature +12
Str 18 (+10) **Dex** 22 (+12) **Wis** 13 (+7)
Con 13 (+7) **Int** 14 (+8) **Cha** 16 (+9)
Equipment longsword

If the PCs persist, the captured eladrin knows only that he and his group were hired by a nameless third party to eliminate the councilor. He does not know who hired the group, or why.

Saffrenia Movrymm Level 13 Controller (Leader)
Medium fey humanoid, eladrin XP 800

Initiative +8 **Senses** Perception +8; low-light vision
HP 122; **Bloodied** 61
AC 27; **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 25, **Will** 27
Saving Throws +5 against charm effects
Speed 6; see also *fey step*

⊕ **Staff** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+18 vs. AC; 1d6 + 6 damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).

↗ **Gust of the Frozen North** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold**
Ranged 10; +17 vs. Fortitude; 2d8 + 6 cold damage, and ongoing 5 cold damage (save ends).

↗ **Autumn's Lure** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Charm**
Ranged 10; +17 vs. Will; the target slides 5 squares.

Healing Touch (minor; encounter) ✦ **Healing**
With a touch, Saffrenia allows the target to spend a healing surge and regain an additional 2d6 hit points.

Fey Step (move; encounter) ✦ **Teleportation**
Saffrenia can teleport 5 squares.

Alignment Good **Languages** Common, Elven
Skills Arcana +14, Bluff +11, Diplomacy +11
Str 10 (+6) **Dex** 15 (+8) **Wis** 14 (+8)
Con 10 (+6) **Int** 16 (+9) **Cha** 11 (+6)
Equipment robes, staff

The Council Celebration

The PCs follow Saffrenia to a council-sponsored celebration in one of Mithrendain's many open parks.

You find yourselves surrounded by eladrin revelers circling through seven large pavilions. Saffrenia explains that this is a council celebration, and that each pavilion belongs to a member of the ruling council. Such celebrations allow the folk of the city to meet freely with the members of the council, discussing concerns, creating petitions, or simply socializing.

With word of the PCs' part in saving Saffrenia already circulating through the city, they are honored guests at the celebration and are welcomed in the pavilions of the other councilors. Saffrenia will be safe enough in her own pavilion during the celebration, giving
the PCs the chance to glean insight into the four councilors Saffrenia suspects.

Inside Information

The following skill challenge sees the PCs make the rounds of the pavilions of the four councilors under suspicion by Saffrenia, seeking confirmation of her fears.

Setup: The PCs can freely circulate throughout the celebration, keeping their eyes and ears open. Saffrenia gives them the names and descriptions of the four council members they should approach (see below). Depending on the racial makeup of the party, the PCs are likely to stand out in this crowd. The looks they get range from astonishment to revulsion, but their notoriety precedes them. The other councilors are eager to meet the party that saved Saffrenia—though some are less thankful than others.

Level: 12 (XP 2,800)

Complexity: 4 (10 successes before 3 failures). Because the skill challenge plays out in four parts (see below), the PCs might wish to seek more successes in order to obtain additional information. For every two additional successes, award the party an additional 700 XP.

Primary Skills: See below.

Special: This section of the adventure is effectively four skill challenges in combination—one for each of the council members under suspicion. Information on each council member (and what kinds of things the PCs might learn from them) is given below.

Though the skill challenge connects specific information to particular checks, you can rework those revelations as you see fit. Improvise responses to the PCs' questions for things not covered below, using the broad sense of each councilor's personality and backstory, and the information in the "Adventure Background" section (page 105).

The PCs can hear about Jelvistra from a number of different sources, but the characters will have to piece the information together to get a full sense of the lamia's plots.

Dresyae Tlathlyn

Seduced by Jelvistra and now her lover, Dresyae is fully corrupted by the lamia and his own desire for power. He sees himself as the eventual master of Mithrendain, and plans to use Jelvistra's talents and contacts to marginalize the other councilors and take control of the military. Once well positioned, he will order both Jelvistra and the other council members into exile.

If the PCs gain two or more successes with Dresyae, they gather enough circumstantial evidence to believe that he is corrupt. If a PC earns a failure while speaking with Dresyae, he or she draws the attention of his guards, who forcibly remove the PC from his pavilion. That PC can make no further checks in this part of the skill challenge.

Primary Skills: Bluff, Diplomacy, Perception.

Bluff (DC 16): The PC quietly claims to know about Dresyae's corruption, or pretends to want to aid the councilor in his secret plans. A successful check causes Dresyae to drop the name of the eladrin noble Jelvistra, and to suggest that there might be a place for the PCs in Dresyae's plans. However, he tells them to steer clear of Saffrenia for their own good.

Diplomacy (DC 10): A PC seeking to ingratiate himself to Dresyae finds the councilor only too willing to talk about himself. He speaks of his role in the council's decision to seal off the catacombs, and lets on that he has even more extensive plans to ensure the prosperity and safety of the city.

Perception (DC 16; DC 10 if following a successful Bluff or Insight check): The PC notes that Dresyae's symbol of office (which he wears pinned to his jacket beneath a cloak) is close in appearance to that worn by Saffrenia, but not an exact match.

Secondary Skills: Insight, Thievery.

Insight (DC 16): Observing Dresyae for an extended period establishes the councilor's dark demeanor. He believes himself superior to his peers on the council, and carries himself with the air of a warrior, not a politician. A successful check grants a +2 bonus on further Bluff or Diplomacy checks in this part of the challenge. The use of this skill does not count as a success or failure in the skill challenge.

Thievery (DC 16): Dresyae is distracted, and a canny PC might be able to steal his symbol of office. If this is done, Saffrenia can tell the PCs how the symbols of office worn by the councilors secretly function as the keys to the arcane seals beneath the city. She also confirms that this symbol is a well-made fake, raising the question of where the real symbol is. The use of this skill does not count as a success or failure in the skill challenge.

Flaeorn Marnon

The extravagant Flaeorn is given to bursts of unusual behavior. One day he might insist that purple is a foul color; the next, he orders his home painted in bright lilac hues. He is manic and random, and the people of Mithrendain love him for it. Flaeorn gives grand gifts to even the lowest of the common folk, and his pavilion is always packed. Jelvistra has repeatedly tried to corrupt Flaeorn, but his mercurial moods have so far thwarted her.

With two or more successes in this part of the challenge, the PCs believe that Flaeorn is not involved in any plots against the city. If a PC fails a check while speaking with Flaeorn, his mood darkens immediately and is noted by his crowd of supporters. Any further checks in this section of the challenge made by the PC (or any other PCs seen speaking with him or her) take a -2 penalty.

Primary Skills: Bluff, Diplomacy, Streetwise.

Bluff (DC 21): The PC can try to flatter or lie her way into Flaeorn's good graces, causing him to gossip about his fellow council members. He suggests that Dresyae is dangerous and power hungry, that Laemu would sell his children if the price were right, and that Serriay is far less capable than her recent success suggests.

Diplomacy (DC 16): The PC offers praise for Flaeorn's pavilion, inspiring the councilor to speak of enjoying the company of honest folk. He contrasts that with a councilor's obligation to deal with supplicants like Jelvistra, always wanting something in exchange for her offers of advice and favors.

Streetwise (DC 16): Flaeorn is surrounded by an adoring crowd. A PC who succeeds on this check learns that the councilor has performed many good works for the city, and that he has donated a sizable amount of his fortune to charities.

Secondary Skill: Insight.

Insight (DC 16): The PC spends time watching Flaeorn interact with the common folk to gauge his temperament and personality. All primary skill checks made by the PC in this part of the challenge gain a +2 bonus. The use of this skill does not count as a success or failure in the skill challenge.

Laemu Spiremrul

Councilor Laemu seeks only to advance himself by the collection of wealth. He was the first to fall to Jelvistra's plots, bought off for coin and the promise of more lucrative dealings with the lamia's unknown master.

The extravagant Flaeorn is given to bursts of unusual behavior. One day he might insist that purple is a foul color; the next, he orders his home painted in bright lilac hues.

Those who gain two or more successes against Laemu believe that he has been bribed to support plans to shut off and seal the catacombs beneath the city. If a PC earns a failure against Laemu, the councilor orders his guards to show him and any PCs seen speaking with him away from his pavilion. Those PCs can make no further checks in this part of the challenge.

Primary Skills: Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate, Streetwise.

Bluff or Intimidate (DC 16): A PC can threaten Laemu or pretend he knows that the councilor is involved in illicit activity. Laemu deflects attention to Serriay, saying that she is the one determined to push through the closing off the catacombs. He merely accepted a small honorarium for his research into the issue.

Diplomacy (DC 21): The PC can attempt to win over Laemu with honest interest in the workings of the city's politics. With a successful check, Laemu speaks of the relationship between himself and those interested in the continued strength of the city, naming Jelvistra as a noble who has Mithrendain's best interests at heart.

A PC who gives Laemu a gift of coins or jewelry worth at least 100 gp gains a +2 bonus on this check.

Streetwise (DC 10): A PC who makes a successful Streetwise skill check overhears the talk of Laemu's underpaid and largely dissatisfied personal guards. They hear of several late-night meetings with Jelvistra, and the fact that Laemu has been bribed with several thousand in gold to support her plans in the council.

Secondary Skill: Insight.

Insight (DC 16): The PC observes Laemu giving greater attention to those city folk who ply him with gifts, establishing the councilor's greed. With a successful check, the PC gains a +2 bonus on his next Diplomacy or Streetwise check made in this challenge. The use of this skill does not count as a success or failure in the skill challenge.

Serriay Celshil

Serriay is a young eladrin who wants to be an effective leader on council but is ill suited to her position. Jelvistra has managed to exert control over her by feeding her suggestions for policy and protocol that Serriay has passed off as her own. Now indebted to Jelvistra, Serriay finds herself taking orders from her "friend."

Diplomacy (DC 16): A PC who engages Serriay in conversation is introduced to her husband Thendol, who is only too happy to talk to the PCs. He speaks at length about Serriay's late-night meetings with the attractive and brilliant Jelvistra.

Insight (DC 16; this check can be made only after a successful Streetwise check): A PC can observe Serriay to intuit that while she genuinely cares for the people of Mithrendain, she seems wholly unsuited for the important role of councilor.

Bluff or Intimidate (DC 21): The PC threatens to expose Serriay's secrets. With a successful check, Serriay admits her relationship with Jelvistra. Additionally, she tells the PCs how the noble's formerly friendly suggestions and direction have lately turned to subtle threats.

Serriay is a young eladrin who wants to be an effective leader on council but is ill suited to her position.

Those who gain two or more successes with Serriay discern that she is beholden to another who has orchestrated her rise to power. While she may be good at heart, the councilor is clearly trying to cover up her connection to Jelvistra.

If a PC fails a skill check in this part of the challenge, Serriay's husband Thendol drunkenly asks them to leave her pavilion. If they do not, he punches them (+6 vs. AC, 2d6 + 5 damage) before passing out. However, Serriay's mortification gives the PC a +2 bonus to further checks in this part of the challenge.

Primary Skills: Diplomacy, Intimidate, Streetwise.

Secondary Check: Streetwise.

Streetwise (DC 10): By observing and listening to the city folk in Serriay's pavilion, the PC hears of the young councilor's recent rise to a leadership role in council. A successful check grants a +2 bonus on the PC's next primary skill check. The use of this skill does not count as a success or failure in the skill challenge.

Ending the Challenge

The PCs can engage the councilors in any order they want, working individually or together.

Success: The PCs gather enough information to suggest which of the four councilors are dealing with Jelvistra. Beyond the specific information they have gained from their successes, give them any information detailed in the other checks that you think is important. Additionally, the PCs' successful attempts at effectively navigating the unfamiliar social environment of the city helps them keep a low profile when they make their way to the Old Battery for the next encounter.

Failure: The PCs' failed attempts at gathering information draw the attention of corrupt city guards loyal to Jelvistra. They note these guards watching them as they leave the celebration. In encounter M3, add two eladrin twilight enforcers to the quicklings the PCs face. Additionally, the guards are able to stake out the warehouse to determine the best points of entry. They and the quicklings gain surprise in the encounter.

Quickling Ambush

Encounter Level 10 (2,500 XP)

Setup

1 blade spider (S)
2 quickling renegades (R)
Xixxit, quickling rogue (X)

If the PCs failed the previous skill challenge, this becomes a level 12 encounter also featuring two eladrin twilight enforcers (corrupt city guards working for Jelvistra). See encounter M1 for stat block, XP, and tactics.

The follow-up attack that Saffrenia fears comes sooner than the councilor expected. Jelvistra sends a swarm of quicklings to kill Saffrenia and all those with her, eliminating everyone the councilor might have spoken to about her suspicions.

If the PCs failed the previous skill challenge, the twilight enforcers help the quicklings set up an ambush. The foes in this encounter gain surprise and the PCs do not get the following Perception check to gain a warning of the attack.

Perception Check
DC 26: *From beyond the distant windows comes the sound of a struggle.*

When the quicklings attack, read:

Breaking glass heralds the arrival of a horde of wicked-looking fey creatures through the blackened windows, their eyes blank, short swords flashing in their hands. A huge spider crashes in through the door a moment later. Even as the bulk of the creatures focus attacks on the outcasts where they scatter, two creatures controlling the spider see Saffrenia and attack.

If the twilight enforcers are in this encounter, read:

Lurking in the shadows are two of the eladrin you saw watching you at the celebration.

Tactics

The quickling renegades use their *quick cuts* power, focusing on lightly armored PCs. They stay in constant motion, using *fey shift* and *quick cuts* to keep out of melee.

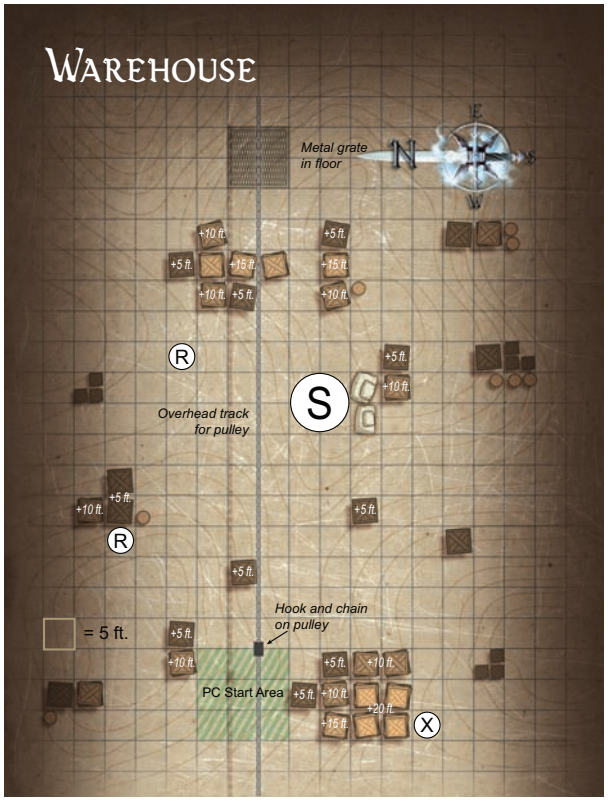
The blade spider moves into the thick of combat to threaten as many PCs as possible, making *double attacks*. Once a target is weakened by poison, the spider turns its attention to a new PC.

Xixxit uses the combat advantage from his *first strike* against a lightly armored spellcaster, then follows up with his *knockout* power in an attempt to get that foe out of the fight. He flanks with the blade spider for combat advantage.

These creatures all fight to the death.

The Larger Battle

The Crimson Outcasts fight alongside the PCs, but unlike Saffrenia, they are not meant to be played as NPC combatants. Don't roll their attacks and damage along with the monsters. Instead, simply describe how the exiles clash with lower-level quicklings in a fight that quickly spreads to other unseen areas of the warehouse. This leaves the PCs free to defend Saffrenia from the elite squad targeting her. When the PCs defeat their foes, the quicklings fighting the Crimson Outcasts flee.



Development

Once the initial assault is dispensed with, the Crimson Outcasts gather up their dead and wounded. Illianter blames Saffrenia and the PCs for allowing themselves to be followed, the young eladrin warning the councilor as he flees.

"Whoever you're up against, they're stronger than you. No mortal-world rabble are going to stop them."

In the aftermath, Saffrenia leads the PCs to the metal grate. This opens to a storm drain system that connects to the catacombs below the city. She tells the

PCs that the streets are no longer safe as she leads them underground.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Moonlight through the shattered windows sheds dim light through the area.

Crates: Wooden storage crates are stacked across the warehouse. A stack can be climbed with a DC 16 Athletics check; the numbers on the tactical map represent the height of a stack in squares. A crate can be pushed off a stack to target a creature below (Strength vs. Reflex, 2d6 + 5 damage, and the target is knocked prone).

Bags of Flour: This pile of flour sacks is difficult terrain. A sack can be cut open and emptied as a minor action, with the flour inside creating a cloud in a burst 1 centered in the bag's square. The cloud provides concealment until the end of the next turn of the character who dumped it.

Iron Grate: A heavy iron grate covers the entrance to the tunnels below. The grate can be pulled up with a DC 16 Strength check.

Pulley: A well-oiled track with a block and tackle runs above the warehouse floor. The pulley runs freely along the track, allowing a PC who succeeds on a DC 22 Athletics check to swing above the fight within 2 squares of the track. This increases the character's speed by 2 and does not provoke opportunity attacks.

Xixxit, Quickling Rogue (X) **Level 10 Skirmisher (Elite)**
Small fey humanoid XP 1,000

Initiative +14 **Senses** Perception +8; low-light vision
HP 208; **Bloodied** 104
AC 25 (29 against opportunity attacks); **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 25, **Will** 21
Saving Throws +2
Action Points 1
Speed 12, climb 6; see also *fey shift* and *quick cuts*

⊕ **Short Sword** (standard; at will) ✦ **Weapon**
+15 vs. AC; 1d6 + 7 damage.

⸸ **Rogue Strike** (standard; at will) ✦ **Weapon**
The quickling rogue moves its speed. At any two points during its move, the quickling rogue makes a short sword attack. The quickling cannot use this power while immobilized or slowed.

⸸ **Knockout** (standard; recharges when first bloodied) ✦ **Weapon**
+13 vs. Fortitude; 3d6 + 7 damage, and the target is knocked unconscious (save ends). If the unconscious target takes any damage, it is no longer unconscious. *Miss:* Half damage, and the target is dazed until the end of the quickling rogue's next turn.

Fey Shift (standard; encounter)
The quickling rogue shifts 10 squares.

Maintain Mobility (minor; recharge ⚅ ⚄ ⚃)
An immobilized quickling rogue is no longer immobilized.

First Strike
At the start of an encounter, a quickling rogue has combat advantage against any creatures that have not yet acted.

Sneak Attack
A quickling rogue deals an extra 2d6 damage against any enemy it has combat advantage against.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Elven
Skills Acrobatics +22, Bluff +10, Perception +13, Stealth +17, Thievery +17
Str 9 (+4) **Dex** 24 (+12) **Wis** 17 (+8)
Con 16 (+8) **Int** 14 (+7) **Cha** 10 (+5)
Equipment short sword, leather armor

2 Quickling Renegades (R) **Level 10 Skirmisher**
Small fey humanoid XP 500

Initiative +14 **Senses** Perception +8; low-light vision
HP 104; **Bloodied** 52
AC 25 (29 against opportunity attacks); **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 25, **Will** 21
Speed 12, climb 6; see also *fey shift* and *quick cuts*

⊕ **Short Sword** (standard; at will) ✦ **Weapon**
+15 vs. AC; 1d6 + 7 damage.

⸸ **Quick Cuts** (standard; at will) ✦ **Weapon**
The quickling renegade moves its speed. At any two points during its move, the quickling makes a basic attack at a -2 penalty. The quickling renegade cannot use this power while immobilized or slowed.

Fey Shift (standard; encounter)
The quickling renegade shifts 10 squares.

Maintain Mobility (minor; recharge ⚅ ⚄ ⚃)
An immobilized quickling renegade is no longer immobilized.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Elven
Skills Acrobatics +22, Bluff +10, Stealth +17
Str 9 (+4) **Dex** 24 (+12) **Wis** 17 (+8)
Con 16 (+8) **Int** 14 (+7) **Cha** 10 (+5)
Equipment short sword

Blade Spider (S) **Level 10 Brute**
Large natural beast (mount, spider) XP 500

Initiative +9 **Senses** Perception +7; tremorsense 10
HP 130; **Bloodied** 65
AC 22; **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 18
Speed 6, climb 6 (spider climb)

⊕ **Claw** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Poison**
+13 vs. AC; 1d8 + 5 damage, and the target takes ongoing 5 poison damage and is weakened (save ends both).

⸸ **Double Attack** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Poison**
The blade spider makes two claw attacks.

⸸ **Combined Attack** (while mounted by a friendly rider of 10th level or higher; at-will) ✦ **Mount, Poison**
When the blade spider's rider makes a melee attack, the blade spider makes a claw attack as a free action against the same target.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Skills Stealth +14
Str 20 (+10) **Dex** 18 (+9) **Wis** 15 (+7)
Con 20 (+10) **Int** 1 (+0) **Cha** 10 (+5)

Deadly Garden

Encounter Level 12 (3,400 XP)

Two Feywild shambling mounds guard this junction, preventing intruders from gaining access to Jelvistra's lair.

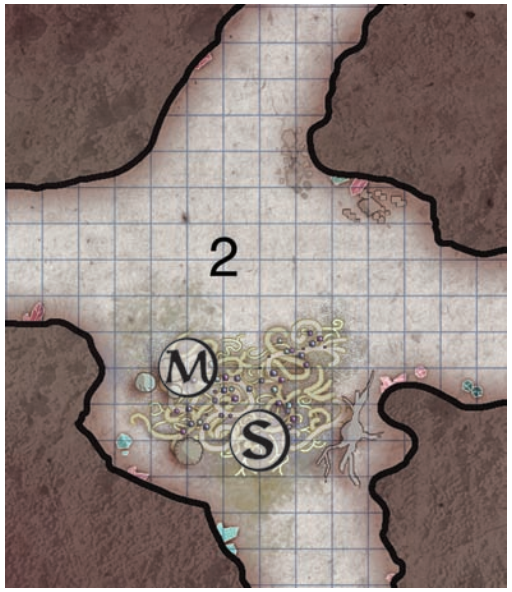
Setup

1 shambling mound (M)
1 stormrage shambler (S)

Once the PCs enter the breach, read:

Despite the lack of light, this high-ceilinged cavern is overgrown with thorny vines, dark rose bushes, and speckled toadstools, some 10 feet high. In addition to the tunnel you entered through, three more rough passages exit to the east.

Both shambling mounds are crouched within the bushes, gaining total concealment. Do not place their miniatures until they are spotted or attack.



Massive Stormrage Shambler (S) **Level 15 Elite Controller**
Large fey animate (plant) XP 2,400
Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +8; darkvision
Lightning Aura (**Lightning**) aura 2; enemies that enter or start their turns in the aura take 5 lightning damage.
HP 302; **Bloodied** 151
Regeneration 10
AC 29; **Fortitude** 29, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 24
Immune lightning; see also *lightning affinity*
Saving Throws +2
Speed 8 (swamp walk)
Action Points 1

⊕ **Tendrils** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Lightning**
Reach 2; +18 vs. AC; 1d8 + 7 damage plus 1d8 lightning damage. While bloodied, the stormrage shambler deals an extra 5 lightning damage.

⸸ **Double Attack** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Lightning**
The stormrage shambler makes two basic attacks.

⇙ **Lightning Blast** (standard; encounter) ✦ **Lightning**
Close blast 3; +18 vs. Reflex; 3d8 + 8 lightning damage.
Miss: Half damage.

Lightning Affinity (immediate reaction, when hit by a lightning attack; at-will) ✦ **Healing**
The stormrage shambler regains 10 hit points. The stormrage shambler cannot attack itself to heal in this fashion.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Skills Stealth +11
Str 20 (+12) **Dex** 8 (+6) **Wis** 12 (+8)
Con 23 (+13) **Int** 5 (+4) **Cha** 7 (+5)

Perception Checks
DC 16: *Something rustles in the mushrooms ahead of you.*
DC 23: *What appeared at first to be more foliage is actually a mass of roots and vines shifting slowly toward you.*

Tactics

The shambling mound uses its *enveloping double attack* to capture a lightly armored foe, then uses *subduing spores* to weaken its prey and those nearby.

The massive stormrage shambler starts with *double attack* but uses its *lightning blast* if it can target multiple foes. Whenever possible, it uses *lightning blast* against PCs engaging the shambling mound to heal its ally.

Massive Shambling Mound (S) **Level 14 Brute**
Large fey animate (plant) XP 1,000
Initiative +8 **Senses** Perception +7; darkvision
HP 170; **Bloodied** 85
Regeneration 5
AC 26; **Fortitude** 28, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 22
Immune lightning; see also *lightning affinity*
Speed 4 (swamp walk)

⊕ **Tendrils** (standard; at-will)
Reach 2; +17 vs. AC; 1d8 + 8 damage.

⸸ **Enveloping Double Attack** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Healing**
The shambling mound makes two basic attacks. If both attacks hit the same Medium or smaller target, the shambling mound makes a secondary attack against the target. *Secondary Attack:* +17 vs. Fortitude; the target is pulled into the shambling mound's space and restrained (save ends). While the target is restrained, no creature has line of sight or line of effect to it. At the start of the shambling mound's turn each round, the enveloped target takes 10 damage and the shambling mound regains 10 hit points. The shambling mound can envelop up to 2 creatures at a time. When the target makes its save, it reappears in a square of its choice adjacent to the shambling mound.

⇙ **Subduing Spores** (standard; encounter) ✦ **Poison**
Close blast 1; +15 vs. Fortitude; 2d8 + 6 poison damage, and the target is weakened (save ends).

Lightning Affinity (immediate reaction, when hit by a lightning attack; at-will) ✦ **Healing**
The shambling mound regains 10 hit points.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Skills Stealth +13
Str 22 (+13) **Dex** 12 (+8) **Wis** 10 (+7)
Con 20 (+12) **Int** 5 (+4) **Cha** 10 (+7)

Treasure

The PCs can find some of the effects of the dead guards outside, including a *potion of vitality* and 400 gp.

Features of the Area

Illumination: None.

Vegetation: The vines, bushes, and mushrooms in this area are difficult terrain. Any creature moving more than 3 squares through them must make a DC 16 Acrobatics check or be cut by thorns for 1d8 + 5 damage.

Selnarine's Lair

Encounter Level 13 (4,200 XP)

Setup

2 feyborn constrictors (S)
Selnarine, briar witch dryad (D)
1 warthorn battlebriar (W)

Selnarine the briar witch dryad is one of Jelvistra's trusted lieutenants. She lives with her pets in this area, caring for the hatchery and overseeing the shambling mounds.

When the PCs enter this area, read:

The ceiling of this large cavern shines like moonlight, bathing the area in a silver glow. To the south, a forest of mushrooms rises more than 6 feet high. To the north stands a dense tangle of chitin-covered trees. Barely visible within the dark thicket, a pit leads down.

If the PCs fought the shambling mounds or have used a light source while moving through the earlier caverns, Selnarine and her allies have an ambush prepared, as indicated on the tactical map. All the creatures in this encounter have concealment where they hide among the trees and mushrooms. Do not place their miniatures until they are spotted or unless they attack.

Perception Checks
DC 10: *The sound of rushing water echoes through the chamber, rising from the tunnel in the floor.*
DC 16: *Something shifts and rustles along the edge of the trees.*
DC 21: Within the forest of mushrooms, an enormous snake slithers slowly toward you.
DC 25: From the far side of the mushroom grove, an eladrin woman watches you.

Tactics

The warthorn battlebriar blocks the central tunnel if the PCs come in from that direction, using its *threatening reach* to hinder anyone trying to pass. It uses *thorn burst* even if it can target only a single PC, making claw attacks only against characters who consistently avoid that attack.

The feyborn constrictors target different PCs with their bite attacks. If a snake hits, it spends an action point to *constrict*. If it misses, it uses *lure of the wild* to drag foes through Selnarine's *curse of thorns* aura and move them close to the battlebriar. The snakes stay away from each other and their allies, so that their *undeniable beauty* causes foes to lose attacks rather than simply redirect them.

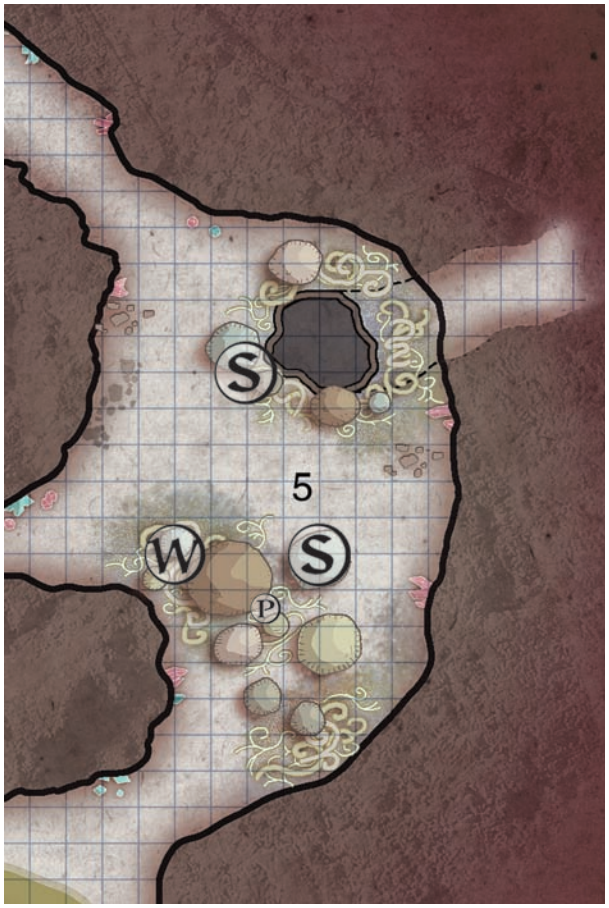
Selnarine moves so that the warthorn battlebriar is within her *thorn boon* aura, and so that the feyborn constrictors can take advantage of her *curse of thorns* aura. She uses her briar cage ability whenever possible, falling back on claw attacks only if necessary.

The snakes and the battlebriar fight to the death. However, if defeat seems certain and at least two of her allies have already been defeated, Selnarine runs to warn the cyclopses below.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Dim light throughout.

Pit: The pit within the trees drops 10 feet to a wide, rough-hewn tunnel. This travels for 150 feet until it comes out in area 6 of the lower level. There is no light in the tunnel.



Trees: This area is difficult terrain. Vines and undergrowth fill the spaces between the trees, providing concealment. The trees appear similar to the trees found in the hatchery (area 3), though their bark has been entirely peeled away to reveal the chitin beneath.

Mushrooms: The mushrooms are blocking terrain.

Selnarine, Briar Witch Dryad (D) **Level 13 Elite Controller**
Medium fey humanoid (plant) XP 1,600

Initiative +8 **Senses** Perception +13
Curse of Thorns aura 3; enemies without forest walk take 2 damage each time they move—or are pulled, pushed, or slid—into a square within the aura. Creatures do not take damage when a briar witch dryad moves closer to them.
Thorn Boon aura 6; allied plants in the aura deal an extra 5 damage with each melee attack.
HP 262; **Bloodied** 131
AC 29; **Fortitude** 27, **Reflex** 25, **Will** 27
Saving Throws +2
Speed 8 (forest walk)
Action Points 1

⊕ **Claws** (standard; at-will)
+18 vs. AC; 1d8 + 3 damage.

Briar Cage (standard; at-will)
Ranged 10; the target is encased in sharp briars; +16 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 4 damage, and the target takes ongoing 5 damage and is restrained (save ends both). A creature in a briar cage has cover. A briar cage can be destroyed (25 hit points; resist 10 to all damage).

Deceptive Veil (minor; at-will) ✦ **Illusion**
The briar witch dryad can disguise itself to appear as any Medium humanoid, usually a beautiful elf or eladrin. A successful Insight check (opposed by the dryad's Bluff check) pierces the disguise.

Thorny Body
Any creature that grabs the briar witch dryad takes 5 damage at the start of its turn.

Treestride (move; at-will) ✦ **Teleportation**
The briar witch dryad can teleport 8 squares if it begins and ends adjacent to a tree, a treant, or a plant of Large size or bigger.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Elven
Skills Bluff +15, Insight +13, Stealth +13
Str 16 (+9) **Dex** 14 (+8) **Wis** 14 (+8)
Con 19 (+10) **Int** 11 (+6) **Cha** 19 (+10)

2 Feyborn Constrictors (S) **Level 9 Elite Soldier**
Large natural beast (fey, reptile) XP 800

Initiative +9 **Senses** Perception +12; low-light vision
HP 192; **Bloodied** 96
AC 26; **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 24
Saving Throws +2
Speed 6, climb 6, swim 6
Action Points 1

⊕ **Bite** (standard; at-will)
+15 vs. AC; 1d10 + 6 damage, and the target is grabbed (until escape).

Constrict (standard; at-will)
Affects a target the feyborn constrictor has grabbed; +13 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 12 damage, and the target is dazed until the end of the feyborn constrictor's next turn.

Undeniable Beauty (immediate interrupt, when the feyborn constrictor is targeted by a melee attack; at will)
+11 vs. Will against the attacker; the attacker must target a different creature or end its attack.

Lure of the Wild (standard; recharge ⚅)
Ranged 10; +11 vs. Will; the target is pulled 5 squares and is dazed (save ends).

Step through the Mists (move; encounter)
The feyborn constrictor teleports up to 3 squares.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Skills Stealth +12
Str 22 (+10) **Dex** 16 (+7) **Wis** 17 (+7)
Con 16 (+7) **Int** 2 (+0) **Cha** 10 (+4)

Warthorn Battlebriar (W) **Level 14 Controller**
Large natural animate (plant) XP 1,000

Initiative +8 **Senses** Perception +9
Grasping Thorns aura 2; enemies treat the area within the aura as difficult terrain; at the start of the warthorn battlebriar's turn, enemies in the aura take 5 damage.
HP 141; **Bloodied** 70
AC 28; **Fortitude** 28, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 24
Speed 6

⊕ **Claw** (standard; at-will)
Reach 2; +19 vs. AC; 1d8 + 6 damage, and the target is pulled 1 square.

Thorn Burst (standard; at-will)
Close burst 2; +17 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 1 damage, plus the target is slowed until the end of the warthorn battlebriar's next turn.

Threatening Reach
A warthorn battlebriar can make opportunity attacks against all enemies within its reach (2 squares).

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Str 23 (+13) **Dex** 13 (+8) **Wis** 15 (+9)
Con 21 (+12) **Int** 3 (+3) **Cha** 12 (+8)

Waterfall Bridge

Encounter Level 14 (5,000 XP)

Setup

10 cyclops guards (G)
2 cyclops impalers (I)
1 wyvern (W)

The fomorian king Musagzi has assigned a force of cyclopses and a trained wyvern as the vanguard of his planned invasion.

As the PCs make their way down the tunnel from area 5, read:

The rough passageway twists and turns as it winds through the depths for nearly a mile. Toward the end, the air in the passage grows cool, the sound of rushing water coming from ahead.

When the PCs can see into this area, read:

The twisting tunnel opens into a vast cavern of glowing purple crystal. To the south, a waterfall tumbles down a steep cliff, flowing through a chasm crossed by a natural bridge. Before the bridge, two one-eyed giants stand guard, a dozen more milling about on the far side of the chasm.

The wyvern begins the encounter out of sight in its rocky nest. Do not place its miniature unless it is spotted or until it attacks.

Perception Check
DC 10: *Spray from the waterfall has made the rock bridge slippery with water and slime.*

DC 18: *Behind an outcropping of rock above the waterfall, a scaled creature shifts in the shadows.*

10 Cyclops Guards (G) **Level 14 Minion**
Large fey humanoid XP 250
Initiative +8 **Senses** Perception +13; truesight 6
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.
AC 27; **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 23
Speed 6
⊕ **Battleaxe** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Reach 2; +17 vs. AC; 7 damage.
Evil Eye (immediate reaction, when a melee attack misses the cyclops guard; at-will)
The cyclops guard makes a melee basic attack against the attacker.
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Elven
Str 22 (+11) **Dex** 16 (+8) **Wis** 17 (+8)
Con 20 (+10) **Int** 11 (+5) **Cha** 11 (+5)
Equipment hide armor, heavy shield, battleaxe

2 Cyclops Impalers (I) **Level 14 Artillery**
Large fey humanoid XP 1,000
Initiative +10 **Senses** Perception +16; truesight 6
HP 111; **Bloodied** 55
AC 28; **Fortitude** 28, **Reflex** 25, **Will** 26
Speed 8
⊕ **Spear** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Reach 2; +19 vs. AC; 1d10 + 6 damage.
Spear (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 10/20; +19 vs. AC; 1d10 + 6 damage.
Impaling Volley (standard; recharge ⚅) ✦ **Weapon**
The cyclops impaler makes two ranged spear attacks against different targets no more than 2 squares apart; ranged 10; +19 vs. AC; 2d6 + 6 damage, and ongoing 5 damage (save ends).
Evil Eye (minor; at-will)
Range sight; the cyclops impaler gains a +2 bonus to ranged attacks made against the target. It can designate only one target with its *evil eye* at a time.
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Elven
Skills Athletics +18
Str 23 (+13) **Dex** 16 (+10) **Wis** 19 (+11)
Con 21 (+12) **Int** 10 (+7) **Cha** 12 (+8)
Equipment leather armor, 12 spears (in sheaf over back)

Wyvern (W) **Level 10 Skirmisher**
Large natural beast (mount, reptile) XP 500
Initiative +10 **Senses** Perception +12; low-light vision
HP 106; **Bloodied** 53
AC 24; **Fortitude** 24, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 19
Speed 4, fly 8 (hover); see also *flyby attack*
⊕ **Bite** (standard; at-will)
Reach 2; +15 vs. AC; 1d8 + 7 damage.
⊕ **Claws** (standard; at-will)
The wyvern can attack with its claws only while flying; +15 vs. AC; 1d6 + 7 damage, and the target is knocked prone.
Sting (standard; at-will) ✦ **Poison**
Reach 2; +15 vs. AC; 1d6 + 4 damage, and the wyvern makes a secondary attack against the same target. *Secondary Attack:* +13 vs. Fortitude; ongoing 10 poison damage (save ends).
Flyby Attack (standard; at-will)
The wyvern flies up to 8 squares and makes one melee basic attack at any point during that movement. The wyvern doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when moving away from the target of the attack.
Aerial Agility +2 (while mounted by a rider of 10th level or higher; at-will) ✦ **Mount**
While flying, the wyvern grants its rider a +2 bonus to all defenses.
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Str 24 (+12) **Dex** 17 (+8) **Wis** 15 (+7)
Con 18 (+9) **Int** 2 (+1) **Cha** 8 (+4)

Tactics

The first two cyclops guards throw themselves at the PCs while the guards on the other side of the chasm bottleneck the party on the slippery bridge. The guards set up a defensive line, pushing forward each time someone in the front rank falls. The first PCs on the cliff are targeted with bull rush attacks in an attempt to drive them into the river.

The cyclops impalers target foes with *evil eye* and *impaling volley* attacks, making spear attacks if the PCs spread out.

The wyvern targets any PCs who can fly. If there are none, it uses its *flyby attack* against lightly armored foes, striking and then flying out of melee range.

All these creatures fight to the death.

Features of the Area

Illumination: The glowing crystal cave walls shed dim light throughout the area.

River Chasm: At the bottom of the 30-foot chasm, the 20-foot-deep river flows north at 6 squares per round. Characters falling in take 3d10 damage and must make a DC 15 Athletics check to tread water or swim to the cliff side.

Characters swept north slam against a wall of stone pillars beyond which the river flows underground. Characters are in no danger of slipping through the pillars. However, on each failed Athletics check, a character takes 1d10 damage from being buffeted against the rocks.

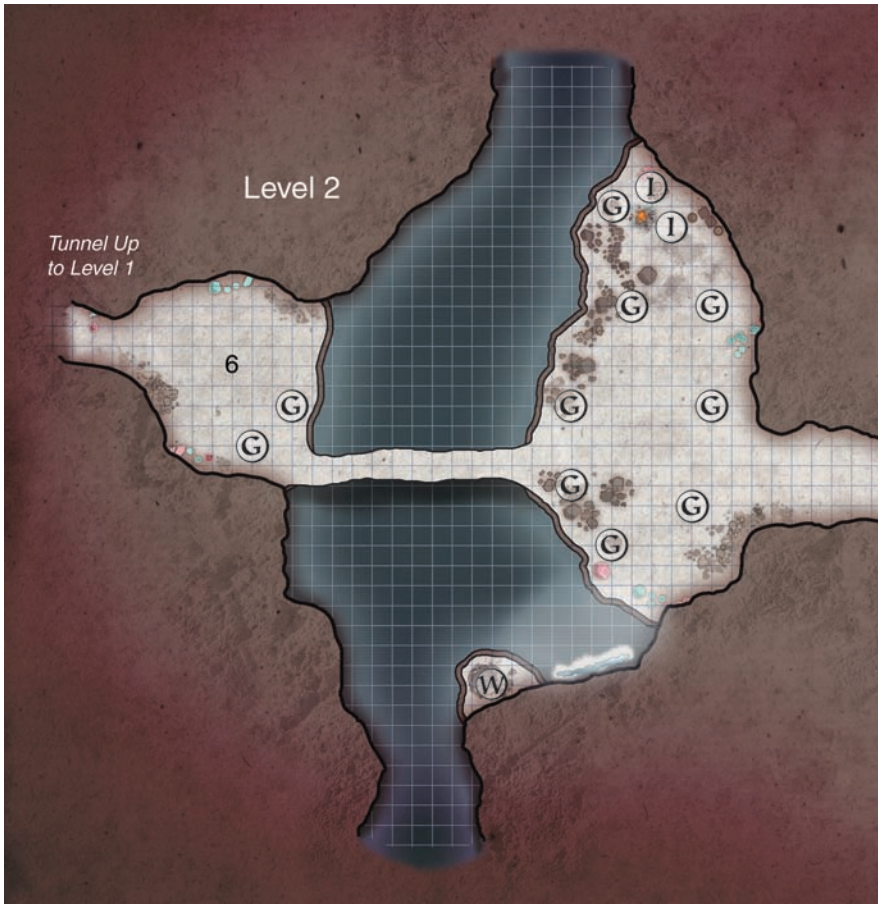
The cliffs can be climbed with a DC 20 Athletics check.

Rock Bridge: The rock bridge is covered with water and slime. A character who runs or makes a melee attack on the bridge must make a DC 10 Athletics check or fall prone and slide over the edge. The character is allowed a saving throw to remain on the bridge, as normal.

Boulders: These provide cover. A boulder can be climbed with a DC 15 Athletics check.

Wyvern's Nest: The wyvern nests on an outcropping 30 feet higher than the bridge (Athletics DC 15 to climb). While in its nest, the creature has cover from those below.

Treasure: A PC who climbs or flies up to the wyvern's nest finds eight gems worth 100 gp each and a +2 *flaming longsword*.



The Lamia's Lair

Encounter Level 15 (5,900 XP)

Setup

Jelvistra (J)
Dresyae (D)
1 shield guardian (S)
3 banshrae warriors (B)

Jelvistra's inner sanctum is an ancient fomorian hall abandoned when the seals below Mithrendain closed off the old routes into the Underdark.

When the PCs open the double doors, read:

Beyond the double door stands a great hall lined with glowing columns, one corner curtained off. To the north is a dining area; to the south, a huge hearth. Directly ahead stands a stone dais and throne.

A surprised-looking Councilor Dresyae Tlathlyn wheels in the center of the chamber. A large stone construct and a banshrae stand near the throne, upon which sits a beautiful eladrin woman with a wicked smile. Beside you, Saffrenia whispers: "Jelvistra…"

"My dear councilor," Jelvistra laughs. "After all the time and effort I've wasted trying to have you killed, you do me the favor of delivering yourself to me." The woman stands as she gestures to Dresyae. "Kill them all."

Two of the banshrae warriors begin the encounter out of sight behind the doors. Do not place their miniatures unless they are spotted or until they attack.

Perception Check
DC 22: *A shadow moves behind the open door, someone hiding there.*
DC 25: *A beetle skitters down the eladrin woman's sleeve and within the folds of her robe.*

Tactics

The banshrae warriors stay in motion to deal extra damage with their *skirmish* power, making *staggering palm* attacks whenever possible. They use *mantid dance* to defend against ranged attacks and recharge *staggering palm*.

The shield guardian stays within 2 squares of its master Jelvistra, attacking anyone who approaches and protecting her with its *shield other* aura.

Jelvistra uses her *pacifying burst* as soon as two or more PCs are within range, then spends her action point to use *devouring swarm* against a stunned foe. She sustains *devouring swarm* each round as she makes *cursed touch attacks*.

Dresyae marks a striker or defender with his *Feywild challenge*. He stays within 10 squares of Jelvistra so his *Feywild tactics* aura can benefit her, making *stab of the entangling wild* attacks while flanking with the banshrae so that all gain the benefit of his *battle lord tactics*.

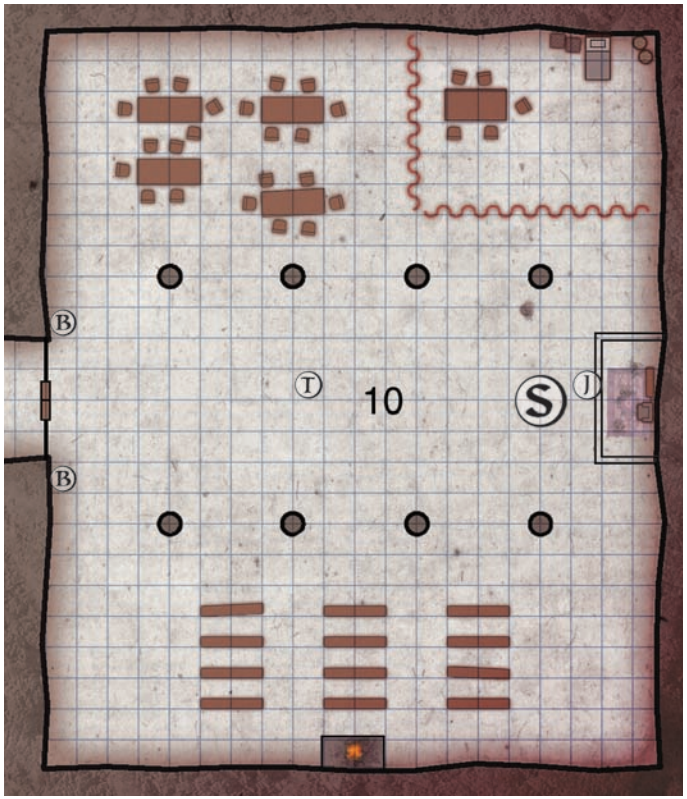
Jelvistra and her servants fight to the death.

Features of the Area

Illumination: The glowing columns shed bright light throughout the area.

Columns: These ancient columns have been recarved to show swarms of insects devouring screaming eladrin. The columns are blocking terrain.

Curtains: These grant total concealment and seal off Jelvistra's quarters. Underneath the bed is a small trunk containing 7,200 gp and Dresyae's symbol of office. The trunk also contains messages indicating that the fomorian king Musagzi is behind the plot to destroy Mithrendain's defenses.



Throne: The throne appears to be adorned with numerous gemstone scarabs, but these are worthless paste. The throne provides cover to anyone behind it.

Treasure

When the battle is done, the PCs can claim Dresyae's *ring of freedom of movement*.

Dresyae Tlathlyn (D) **Level 12 Elite Soldier (Leader)**
Medium fey humanoid XP 1,400

Initiative +14 **Senses** Perception +7; low-light vision
Feywild Tactics aura 10; fey creatures in the aura score a critical hit on a roll of 19 or 20 (a roll of 19 is not an automatic hit, however).
HP 234; **Bloodied** 117
AC 30; **Fortitude** 24, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 22
Saving Throws +2; +5 against charm effects
Speed 5; see also *fey step*
Action Points 1

⊕ **Longsword** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+17 vs. AC; 1d8 + 7 damage.

⸸ **Stab of the Entangling Wild** (standard action or opportunity attack; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Weapon**
Requires longsword; +17 vs. AC; 3d8 + 7 damage, and the target is restrained until the end of Dresyae's next turn. Dresyae cannot attack with his longsword while the target is restrained.

Battle Talent
Dresyae scores critical hits on attack rolls of natural 19 and 20. Whenever Dresyae scores a critical hit, he and all allies within 5 squares of him regain 6 hit points.

Feywild Challenge (standard; encounter)
Ranged 10; the target is marked until the end of the encounter or Dresyae dies, taking 4 damage each round it does not attack Dresyae.

Fey Step (move; encounter) ✦ **Teleportation**
Dresyae can teleport 5 squares.

Harvest's Sorrow (immediate reaction, when an ally within 5 squares of Dresyae is damaged; at-will)
Half the attack's damage is negated, and Dresyae takes the other half.

Battle Lord Tactics
Dresyae and his allies deal an extra 2d6 damage against enemies that Dresyae flanks,

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Elven
Skills Athletics +15, Arcana +10, History +10, Nature +12
Str 18 (+10) **Dex** 22 (+12) **Wis** 13 (+7)
Con 13 (+7) **Int** 14 (+8) **Cha** 16 (+9)
Equipment longsword, *ring of freedom of movement*

Jelvistra, Lamia (J) **Level 12 Elite Controller (Leader)**
Medium fey magical beast (shapechanger) XP 1,400

Initiative +8 **Senses** Perception +13
Swarm's Embrace aura 1; an enemy that starts its turn in the aura takes 10 damage.
HP 244; **Bloodied** 122
AC 28; **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 26
Resist takes half damage from melee and ranged attacks; **Vulnerable** 10 against close and area attacks
Saving Throws +2
Speed 6, climb 6
Action Points 1

⊕ **Cursed Touch** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Healing**
+16 vs. Fortitude; 1d6 + 4 damage, and the target is dazed (save ends). In addition, the lamia regains a number of hit points equal to the amount of damage dealt.

⸸ **Devouring Swarm** (standard; sustain minor; at-will)
Reach 5; +16 vs. Fortitude; 3d6 + 4 damage. When the lamia sustains this power, the devouring swarm deals 3d6 + 4 damage to the target (no attack roll required). The target must be within this power's range for the lamia to sustain the power.

Pacifying Burst (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Psychic**
Close burst 5; +16 vs. Will; the target is stunned (save ends).

Change Shape (minor; at-will) ✦ **Polymorph**
A lamia can alter its physical form to appear as an attractive Medium humanoid of any race or gender (see Change Shape, *MM* 280).

Squeezing Swarm
By altering its shape, a lamia can squeeze through small openings as if it were a Tiny creature (see "Squeeze," *PH* 292).

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Elven
Skills Arcana +14, Bluff +16, Insight +13
Str 13 (+7) **Dex** 14 (+8) **Wis** 14 (+8)
Con 18 (+10) **Int** 17 (+9) **Cha** 21 (+11)

About the Author

Greg Marks is an evil mastermind directing his criminal army of precocious felines from the birthplace of gaming: Lake Geneva, Wisconsin. He and his cat minions have contributed to *City of Stormreach*, written numerous adventures for the RPGA, contributed repeatedly to previous incarnations of *Dragon Magazine*, and co-authored several products for Fantasy Flight Games' *Midnight* setting including: *Star and Shadow*, *Hammer and Shadow*, *Legends of Shadow*, and *Honor and Shadow*.

3 Banshrae Warriors (B) **Level 12 Skirmisher**
Medium fey humanoid XP 700

Initiative +14 **Senses** Perception +8; low-light vision
HP 121; **Bloodied** 60
AC 26; **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 22
Speed 8

⊕ **Slam** (standard; at-will)
+17 vs. AC; 1d8 + 4 damage.

⸸ **Staggering Palm** (standard; recharges after the use of *mantid dance*)
+17 vs. AC; 2d8 + 4 damage, plus the target is stunned until the end of the banshrae warrior's next turn.

Blowgun Dart (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 5/10; +17 vs. AC; 1d4 + 6 damage.

Melee Agility (minor, usable immediately after hitting with a melee attack; at-will)
The banshrae warrior shifts 1 square.

Mantid Dance (move; recharge ⚄ ⚄ ⚅)
Until the end of its next turn, the banshrae warrior gains a +2 bonus to all defenses and all noncritical ranged attacks automatically miss it.

Skirmish +2d8
If, on its turn, the banshrae warrior ends its move at least 4 squares away from its starting point, it deals an extra 2d8 damage on its melee attacks until the start of its next turn.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** telepathy 20
Str 18 (+10) **Dex** 23 (+12) **Wis** 15 (+8)
Con 17 (+9) **Int** 14 (+8) **Cha** 20 (+11)
Equipment blowgun, darts

Shield Guardian (S) **Level 14 Soldier**
Large natural animate (construct) XP 1,000

Initiative +9 **Senses** Perception +15; darkvision
Shield Other aura 2; as long as its master is within the aura, the shield guardian grants its master a +2 bonus to all defenses and takes half of its master's damage until it is destroyed.
HP 138; **Bloodied** 69
AC 30; **Fortitude** 29, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 27
Immune charm, disease, fear, poison, sleep
Speed 4

⊕ **Slam** (standard; at-will)
Reach 2; +20 vs. AC; 2d6 + 7 damage.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Str 24 (+14) **Dex** 10 (+7) **Wis** 16 (+10)
Con 18 (+11) **Int** 7 (+5) **Cha** 9 (+6)

Information Management, Part 2

BY JAMES WYATT

Last Month, we talked about how to pull campaign information together for your players, creating a player handout and keeping a player notebook. This month, we look at the same issue from your side of the screen: how to keep your own notes and ideas about your campaign organized.

The DM's Notebook

In talking about the player notebook last time, I pointed out that a physical notebook works great for that purpose, because it's easy for the players to access at the game table. The same is true of your DM's notebook. It's probably the case that more DMs use computers at the game table than players do, and the ease of keeping a DM's notebook in an electronic format is one good reason to have a computer at the table. But if you're one of those DMs (like me) who prefers that the only screen between you and the players is a cardboard DM screen, you're probably looking at a hybrid format—a notebook you maintain on a computer but print out for reference at the table.

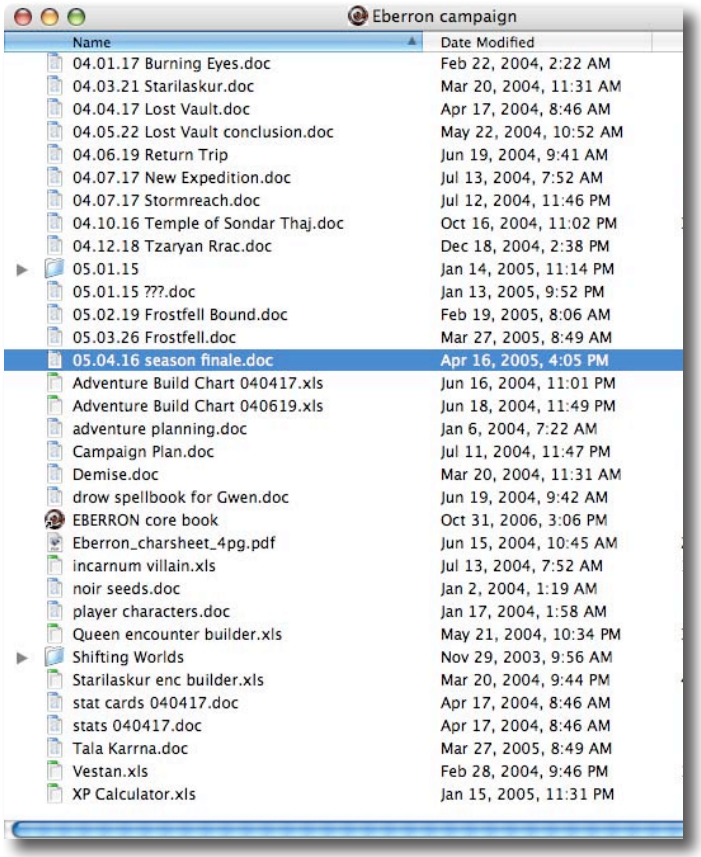
Here's a simple example. You've already created a campaign handout for your players. Print an extra copy for yourself, and that's the first page of your DM's notebook. Whatever other notes you have about your campaign, type them up, print them out, and stick them in the notebook. Organize those notes in whatever way works best for you—you might have a section for NPCs, or sections for each distinct geographical area that include NPCs, maps, and other notes about the area. You'll want a page or two for your campaign arc, and then sections (you might want to use dividers) for each adventure, whether you create those adventures yourself, buy them as physical product, or download them from this magazine. It's a great idea to create the section for an adventure as soon as you have any idea of what the adventure will be (perhaps because it appears in your campaign arc). That way, you can make notes in that section as ideas occur to you, and they'll be all in one place when you get around to fleshing out that adventure idea. Be sure to keep a section of your notebook for your idea file, those random thoughts that occur to you that might or might not have anything to do with this campaign. When you come up short on ideas for a new adventure or a new campaign, that idea file is the first place to look.

Depending on how you work, some or all of the pages in your DM's notebook will be documents on a computer that you print out. Try organizing those files on your computer in a structure that mirrors the organization of the physical notebook. In a "DM's Notebook" directory, for example, I might create sub-directories for "Campaign Handout," "Greenbrier Village," "Greenbrier Chasm Part 1," "Gates of Firestorm Peak," "Idea File," and so on. Anything I type up, download, or sketch in a graphics program can then go in the appropriate directory.

It might actually be helpful to extend the metaphor of a computer directory back to your physical DM's notebook as well. Dave Noonan uses a portable file box as his "notebook," with folders for his campaign

information and folders for each PC. A nice thing about that kind of container is that it can hold things that won't easily fit in a notebook, such as props, cards (for PC powers or for magic items), or poker chips you use for action point markers. It's also a great way to bring miniatures and Dungeon Tiles to the game.

Looking at the files for old campaigns on my computer now, I wish I had been that organized. Instead, both my physical and my electronic notebooks are jumbled collections of files—some named according to date, some hole-punched, and some scattered haphazardly around the physical or virtual space. Here's the computer directory for my old Eberron campaign, as an example of how not to keep organized:


Eberron campaign
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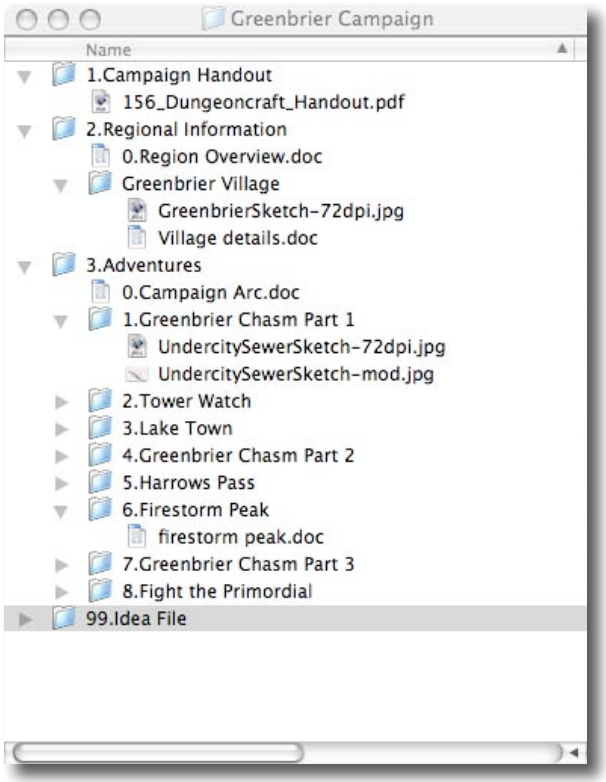
Adventure Build Chart 040619.xls Jun 18, 2004, 11:49 PM
adventure planning.doc Jan 6, 2004, 7:22 AM
Campaign Plan.doc Jul 11, 2004, 11:47 PM
Demise.doc Mar 20, 2004, 11:31 AM
drow spellbook for Gwen.doc Jun 19, 2004, 9:42 AM
EBERRON core book Oct 31, 2006, 3:06 PM
Eberron_charsheet_4pg.pdf Jun 15, 2004, 10:45 AM
incarnum villain.xls Jul 13, 2004, 7:52 AM
noir seeds.doc Jan 2, 2004, 1:19 AM
player characters.doc Jan 17, 2004, 1:58 AM
Queen encounter builder.xls May 21, 2004, 10:34 PM
Shifting Worlds Nov 29, 2003, 9:56 AM
Starilaskur enc builder.xls Mar 20, 2004, 9:44 PM
stat cards 040417.doc Apr 17, 2004, 8:46 AM
stats 040417.doc Apr 17, 2004, 8:46 AM
Tala Karrna.doc Mar 27, 2005, 8:49 AM
Vestan.xls Feb 28, 2004, 9:46 PM
XP Calculator.xls Jan 15, 2005, 11:31 PM

This, my first stab at organizing files and folders for my Greenbrier campaign, is already looking a lot better:



Text Tools

There is a certain appeal to using a word processing program to lay out beautiful pages and create a DM's notebook that resembles the Forgotten Realms Campaign Guide, maybe even including beautiful art (whether you create it yourself or scour the Internet for it). Believe me, I understand that appeal—I've been doing that since I was in middle school, and now I get to do it for a living. However, it's not necessarily the best way to organize information for an ongoing campaign.

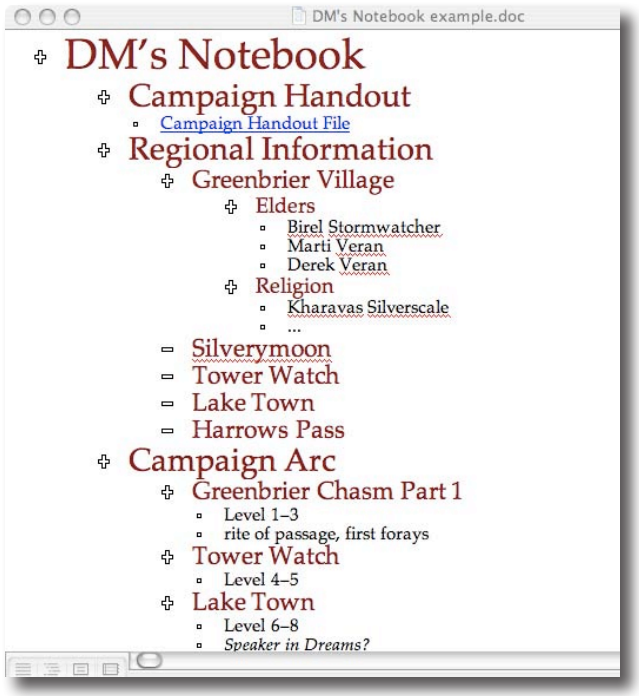
First of all, that approach encourages you to do more work than you need to do, to overprepare your campaign. You don't need finely crafted pages of text detailing every region of your campaign world; you need the minimum of notes you need to guide your players through the regions they're actually going to enter. It's also all too easy to get bogged down in the big picture of designing your world and forget to give thought to the adventures your players will have there, starting with an outline of your campaign arc.

Beyond that, though, the emphasis of your DM's notebook should be on managing information for yourself, making it easy for you to keep track of the details you create for your campaign, both as you prepare and as you run games. A printed book is okay for that purpose, but it shifts the emphasis to presentation—to creating a pretty product you can show your players, share with others, or even sell as a PDF on the internet. Fundamentally, a DM's notebook is a quantity of freeform text—everything from notes about the races in your campaign to lists of NPC names—that you want to be able to type in, organize however you want, and then search. That's where the power of digital tools really shine.

A word processing program can work just fine for managing this information. Of course you can search in such a program. But would you rather click through every occurrence of the word "dragonborn" in your masterwork campaign guide, or see a list of search results in context, like you get when you search the internet, and click directly to the one you want?

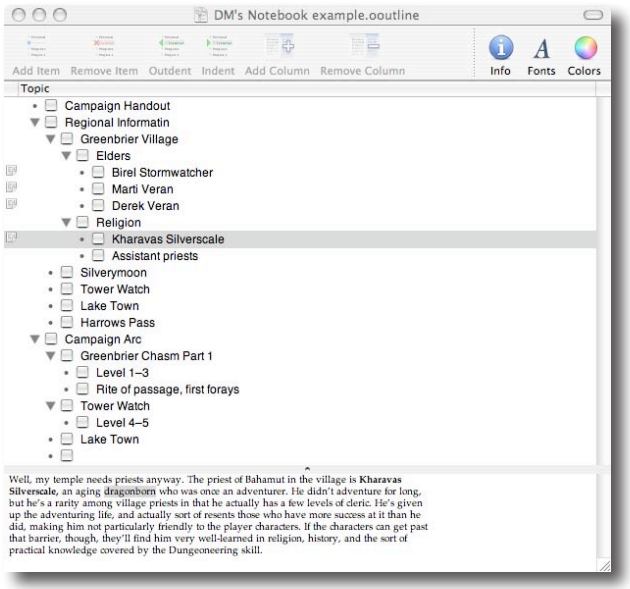
If you are going to use a word processing program, you might be better off using something like an outline or notebook view (like those in Microsoft Word) rather than a page layout view. Instead of thinking about your document as a book you're preparing for publication, think of it as a repository for your notes. An outline or notebook view can more easily give you a place to jot your notes, letting you collapse and expand sections to get quickly to the right section for

the note you want to add. Here's an example of how I might use Microsoft Word to maintain a campaign notebook:



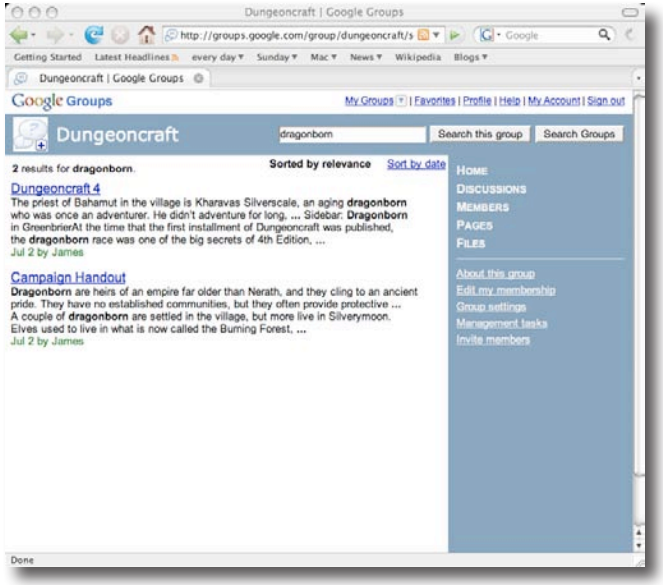
Notice that I used a hyperlink to the campaign handout file I created last month.

There are also programs dedicated to outlining and notetaking that can do the job better. I use a Macintosh at home and work, so I'm not familiar with the world of Windows software, but an example from my world is OmniOutliner, shown here:


DM's Notebook example.ooutline
Add Item
Remove Item
Outdent
Indent
Add Column
Remove Column
Info
Fonts
Colors
Topic
Campaign Handout
Regional Informatin
Greenbrier Village
Elders
Birel Stormwatcher
Marti Veran
Derek Veran
Religion
Kharavas Silverscale
Assistant priests
Silverymoon
Tower Watch
Lake Town
Harrows Pass
Campaign Arc
Greenbrier Chasm Part 1
Level 1–3
Rite of passage, first forays
Tower Watch
Level 4–5
Lake Town
Well, my temple needs priests anyway. The priest of Bahamut in the village is Kharavas Silverscale, an aging dragonborn who was once an adventurer. He didn't adventure for long, but he's a rarity among village priests in that he actually has a few levels of cleric. He's given up the adventuring life, and actually sort of resents those who have more success at it than he did, making him not particularly friendly to the player characters. If the characters can get past that barrier, though, they'll find him very well-learned in religion, history, and the sort of practical knowledge covered by the Dungeoneering skill.

The little icon at the far left of some lines in the outline shows that I've entered text for those items, which appears in the window below when I click on an item. In this example, I've just searched for "dragonborn," so that word is highlighted in the text about Kharavas down below.

When I get my Greenbrier campaign off the ground for real (Real Soon Now), either of these approaches is going to mean taking all the information that I've created for these columns so far and organizing it, copying chunks of text and pasting them in a different sequence to keep them organized. Here's a different approach, suitable for the lazy or overworked. I created a Google Group for my Greenbrier campaign. I created a bunch of pages and just dumped the text from my first four Dungeoncraft columns into those pages. Now I can search across all of those files, say, for every mention of dragonborn:


Dungeoncraft | Google Groups
Google Groups
Dungeoncraft
dragonborn
Search this group
Search Groups
2 results for dragonborn.
Sorted by relevance
Sort by date
Dungeoncraft 4
The priest of Bahamut in the village is Kharavas Silverscale, an aging dragonborn who was once an adventurer. He didn't adventure for long. ... Sidebar: Dragonborn in GreenbrierAt the time that the first installment of Dungeoncraft was published, the dragonborn race was one of the big secrets of 4th Edition, ...
Jul 2 by James
Campaign Handout
Dragonborn are heirs of an empire far older than Nerath, and they cling to an ancient pride. They have no established communities, but they often provide protective ...
A couple of dragonborn are settled in the village, but more live in Silverymoon. Elves used to live in what is now called the Burning Forest, ...
Jul 2 by James
Home
Discussions
Members
Pages
Files
About this group
Edit my membership
Group settings
Management tasks
Invite members
Done

Eventually I will want that information to be more organized, but the Google Groups approach leads nicely to the next topic.

Sharing and Collaboration

Keeping your campaign information on the Internet has two solid advantages over storing it just on your own computer or in a physical notebook. One, you can access it wherever you are—during a slow minute at work or a study period at school. Two, depending on how you set it up, your players can access it as well.

Note that I'm using Google Groups as an example, but I'm not necessarily endorsing Google, here—there are plenty of similar tools freely available on the Internet.

When you create a web page in Google Groups, you can set it so that only you can see the page, so that any member of your group can see it, or so that anyone can see it. For the pages I created with all my campaign notes (in the form of these articles), I

set them so only I can see them. But I also put the information from the campaign handout I created last month on its own page, and set that so any group member can view it. I could set editing privileges in the same way—for example, if I created pages for the player characters in the campaign, I could set them up so the players could edit those pages.

But an Internet group comes with a selection of other tools to help facilitate communication and collaboration between me and my players. There's a single email address we can use to send email to everyone in the campaign. There's a file download section where I can store the fancy PDF version of the campaign handout, as well as images and other resources for my players. And there's a discussion section that I could use for a session or adventure log. I (or a designated player) can type up a summary of the session, and then other players can add comments or additional information. In Google Groups, I find the discussion section less than ideal for that purpose, because it also sends email to the group members. But any form of blog, really, is ideal for an adventure log, especially if it allows the players to comment—to add their own notes to the ones you or your designated note-taker write down, or to share funny observations or quotes from the session. (An adventure log that's kept in character by one of the players can be both effective and amusing, particularly when the character in question has a quirky personality or strong opinions about the other player characters. If the other players add comments in character, that can help keep the blog lively!)

Two words of warning on this subject: First, if you're like many DMs, you'll find that it's a challenge to get your players to spare more than a passing thought for your campaign between sessions. That's not a reflection on you as a DM, but most likely an indication that your players have busy lives and other things to think about when they're not at your game table. That can mean a pretty quiet Google Group.

Second, remember that the primary purpose of a tool like this group is to help you keep your information organized. Whatever tool you choose, make sure the end result is something you can access easily at the table, whether that's because you have a computer with you behind the DM screen or because you make hard copies of everything on your computer and file them in a physical notebook. Ideally, it should be just as easy for you to add information to your (physical or virtual) notebook in the middle of a game session as it is for you to find information you need. Again, though, that can mean scribbling a note on a page in a physical book in mid-session and then transferring that note to an electronic file after the session, or it can mean typing the note directly into a file or a Web page you have open during the game.

Keeping track of time in a D&D campaign can be a bother, it can be something you pretty much ignore, or it can be a fun and rewarding way to make your campaign world seem more real.

Tracking Time

Keeping track of time in a D&D campaign can be a bother, it can be something you pretty much ignore, or it can be a fun and rewarding way to make your campaign world seem more real. It's not essential that you keep any kind of careful track of the passage of time. I say that because it's not my favorite part of running a game, and it's something I easily lose track of. But there are some easy things you can do to keep the passage of time in your game rooted in the simulation of reality.

Incidentally, keeping track of time in your campaign is much easier if your world happens to have twelve months of irregular length, totaling 365 days each year. Change the names of the months and the days of the week if you want to, to give your world an otherworldly feeling, but tracking time on an earth-like calendar, as irrational as it might seem, is easier for you and for your players than working on a calendar you've created for your own world.

The easiest is to note the start date of an adventure, make a hatch mark beneath it every time the characters stop for an extended rest, and at the end of the adventure tally up the number of days that have passed and note the end date. When you start the next adventure, make sure its start date is later than the end date of the last adventure. That's all you really need to ensure that you can describe the changing seasons to your players.

You can also print out a calendar sheet—either a page from a real-world calendar, or something you create to match the calendar of your world. On that page, you can note what characters do with each day that passes—"travel to Harrows Pass" might cover three or four days on the calendar one week, while the next day might say, "HP encounters 1, 2, 6, 5."

You can do the same sort of thing in just a running text format, either on paper or in an electronic document. I use this approach for my novels, as in this example from my working files for *Storm Dragon:*

Eyre 12, 999 YK:
(morning) teleport to Darguun, stock up on supplies
Rienne leaves Stormhome on airship.
(afternoon) teleport to Paluur Draal and explore. Big fight between Haldren and Gaven. Haldren teleports away, while Gaven and Senya remain. They start moving toward Korranberg. They need to make about 75 miles on foot: that's about 3 or 4 days.

Eyre 13, 999 YK:
(morning) Gaven and Senya on the streambank; Haldren's rendezvous with Vaskar
(late morning) Rienne on the airship looking over the Mournland
(night) Gaven and Senya talk about the Prophecy

Eyre 14, 999 YK:
(morning) Rienne arrives in Vathirond
Eyre 17, 999 YK:
(noon) Gaven and Senya reach Korranberg and board the lightning rail
Korranberg => Zolanberg is 300 miles @ 30 mph; 10 hours.
(11 pm) G&S reach Zolanberg, avoid authorities again
Zolanberg => Sterngate is 386 miles = 13 hours

Eyre 18, 999 YK:
(noon) reach Sterngate
lightning rail reaches Starilaskur around midnight (12 hours)

The main reason I needed to keep track of time like this is because I had different characters in different parts of the world doing things at the same time, and I needed to bring them together eventually. That's the best reason for tracking time in your D&D game as well, whether your group of player characters splits up at some point or you need to coordinate their activities with those of one or more NPCs. When I was one DM in a shared-world campaign, keeping track of time was particularly important. Each player had multiple characters, partly because of situations where one character went on an adventure that consumed long stretches of game time, leaving those characters unavailable for other adventures that took place in the same timeframe!

Whatever approach you choose for tracking time, keep your chronological record in your DM's notebook where you can make easy reference to it.

And that's what I have to offer on the subject of managing your campaign information. How about you? Have anything to add? How do you keep your notebook organized?

When I was one DM in a shared-world campaign, keeping track of time was particularly important. Each player had multiple characters...

About the Author

James Wyatt is the Lead Story Designer for D&D and one of the lead designers of D&D 4th Edition. In over seven years at Wizards of the Coast, he has authored or co-authored award-winning adventures and settings including the Eberron Campaign Setting, City of the Spider Queen, and Oriental Adventures. His more recent works include Expedition to Castle Ravenloft, Cormyr: The Tearing of the Weave, and The Forge of War. His third Eberron novel, Dragon Forge, was released in 2008.

Let Player's Manage Themselves
Part 1

BY STEPHEN RADNEY-MACFARLAND

So far in this column, I've talked a great deal about table management, information management, and campaign management. Each of these is important to the game, and there might be an infinite number of tricks and tactics to explore with the goal of making a better, smother, and more enjoyable game experience. But there is another, more elusive type of management that often becomes a pitfall in the path to a long and enjoyable campaign: managing your players.

Like many tasks in Dungeons & Dragons, this type of management has traditionally been the bailiwick the Dungeon Master. But it doesn't have to be. In fact, it shouldn't be. After all, you have a lot on your plate. Even going with the 1-hour preparation advice in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* (page 18, if you haven't had a chance to read that golden bit of advice yet), that's 1 hour above and beyond that of the rest of the players. And that doesn't account for straightening the house, appeasing the significant other, and gathering the minis, toys, props, and tools that will be required during the game. To then add to your list of chores the task of making sure everyone has double checked their social calendars and can show up this week, remind everyone what happened the last session, and make sure folks have their characters up to date just doesn't seem fair. I mean you're the Dungeon Master, not a parent.

My mantra in Save My Game is that if you're always proactive, your game will never really need saving. This is true even with most aspects of player management. The best way to manage them is to make sure they have the tools to manage themselves.

In general, I find there are four main concerns when it comes to managing players. They are:

- ✦ Player attendance (and how to deal with absence)
- ✦ Player materials
- ✦ Player information and planning
- ✦ Player relationships

This month, we'll take a look at the first two, and leave the others for next time.

Could You Just Show Up, Already!

Many gaming groups suffer a Mark. If you've never seen the movie *The Gamers*, Mark is the player who constantly misses a session because of one reason or another, and when he does show up, it might only be for a brief cameo, and then he's out the door again. Why do we suffer these inconsiderate losers? Usually because they are our friends, sometimes because they are charming, but always because we other players let them get away with it. Let's face it: Many gamers tend to be non-confrontational, and even when it annoys them that Mark's always absent, late, or attends intermittently, they're unlikely to say much about it . . . at least to his face. Worse still, they'll think it is your job as DM to handle the problem.

Don't let that happen.

First off, understand that every so often even your most devoted player will miss a session or two. Heck, count on it. The worst thing to do in this situation is cancel the game. Only cancel when the conflict is yours, or you are missing a critical mass of players. Nothing kills a game quickly like a stream of cancelled games.

Much like the theater, the show must go on. And it can go on; you just need to figure out what to do with the missing player's character.

My favorite trick is to create a house rule that designates a proxy player for each character (I talked about this trick a little last month). Each player designates another player that is always in charge of running his or her character during missed sessions. This method is pure gold for a number of reasons. First, it doesn't saddle the DM with playing missing characters. Second, it helps the story flow. There can be no worse killer of verisimilitude like the outright disappearance of one of the story's main characters.

Lastly, it puts pressure on the Marks of the world to show up. The proxy player will be very understanding of the occasional absence from the game, but if that proxy is playing two characters for weeks straight, you can bet your life she's going to call Mark and get him to show up to games or get him to realize he doesn't have time for a regular game.

There are other ways to handle missing characters, but most of them are fraught with some form of peril or the other. Docking treasure or XP creates a level or treasure disparity that can be disruptive to group dynamics and is too punitive for my tastes. I've already outlines why I don't think the DM should play the character, and having the character fade into the background is a disappointing, albeit sometimes necessary trick you should reserve for a last resort. On the other hand, the proxy player is a prime example of a simple trick that gives players responsibility over the game. This will improve the experience for everyone, and free up your time and brain power for creating a great story and fun encounters.

Give Your Players a Room of Their Own

Or at least a space in a file folder. Like a D&D locker room (though hopefully without the stench), a storage and prep space should help speed the start time for your game.

In my home campaign, I use a variety of cards and game aids. I have magic item cards, initiative cards, power cards, quest cards, and various other roleplaying aids. Between sessions, they all live in a file folder with individual pockets, one for each player. At the end of each game session, each player puts their cards in their section of the file folder, and after the game the file folder gets put away in a special place. Between games I rarely touch the folder, and when I do I am careful to put everything back exactly how I found it. By giving my players a small but personal space for their character accessories, I've sidestepped the problems of players forgetting (or losing) those little bits, and found that play begins quicker, as that common area limits the amount of time the players look through backpacks and folders for their characters and associated components.

Of course, I would also beseech the players out there to stay organized when your DM doesn't have a space for you to store these things. In one of the lunch games I play in here at work, I do the same thing, but just for me. On my desk, in a special place, is a folder that has my characters, my power cards, and my notes. After every game, I make my updates and put it back. I'm not overly compulsive about it. I'm just careful and consistent . . . at least about this one thing.

Being organized and giving your players tools to stay organized is one of the best ways to limit the sputters that can slow down game starts and game play.

Next month we'll take a look at player information and planning along with player relationships. But for right now, it's time to take a look in the mailbag again!

Wherefore Art Thou, DM?

I'm a player, not a DM, but I'm trying to get a gaming group together. We have plenty of folks who want to play, but we're having problems with our DM. When I originally talked to him about DMing the game, he seemed excited and enthusiastic. But whenever I try to talk to him about actually sitting down for our first session, he avoids the subject in any way possible, and he ignores any e-mails or other electronic messages I send him on the subject. Any ideas for how I can get him in the game, or should we just see who else is willing to step up and DM?

—Ready-to-Role Scott

I would just sit down and ask him point blank, "Hey man, do you want to do this or should we find another DM?" If he says yes, but stalls again, you might want to set a deadline to start the game. He might be procrastinating because he honestly wants to DM a game but is having a hard time finding the time to prepare and thinks if he can puts it off for just one more week he can fit it into his schedule.

You could also suggest alternating DMs. See if you can't start with someone else behind the screen (maybe even you) and let your friend jump in when he's ready to run. That's never a bad idea for any group. Real life can be a harsh taskmaster, and having a back-up DM in the group who can step in during busy points of your primary DM's life can mean the difference between a gaming group continuing or disintegrating from neglect.

Like all aspects of managing a play group, be proactive. Solutions come quickly with a glass of candor chased with a shot of empathy. Find out the root issue of the problem, be understanding and judicious in creating a solution, and good gaming among friends should follow.

Look! A Monkey!

I love Dungeons & Dragons. It's a great game, and I introduced my entire group to it. They're great friends of mine, but sometimes, even in the middle of a game, I lose interest. Everyone around the table will be extremely excited, talking about things in the last combat, or throwing out witty remarks and inside jokes. I just sometimes find myself having trouble staying focused. This is pretty bad since I'm our main and most experienced DM.

As the DM, what can I do to not grow bored during my own session?

—Dozing-Off Justin

It sounds like you are suffering from either DM fatigue or this is occurring during the "talky" part of the games, where you are not an active part of the game. If it's DM fatigue, you might be running your sessions for too long, you might be running it too often, or maybe you're not taking enough breaks. Breaks are very important. While being a DM is fun, it's also work, and giving the brain a good rest or the body a stretch every hour or two will do wonders to improve your attention and energy. When my energy is low, I DM standing up. I use this trick a lot at conventions, as I find that it increases my energy, focus, and adds urgency to the game.

If it's not your energy or mental focus, it may be that you're drifting off during the times when the players are chatting among themselves and not actually playing the game. These could be parts of the game where you seemingly have nothing to do, but I submit that these are the points of the game that you should be infusing action into your game. Remember: You are playing too, and if you're not having fun, eventually you're going to stop playing. When you are getting bored or drifting off, just ask yourself this question: What can I do to infuse the most fun into the game right now. Once you have the answer, do it!

Setting Soup

I created a setting that I like very much. The problem is that my players don't like some elements or concepts I designed. Each player has his own idea for the campaign. One of them wants me to find more inspiration from Iron Kingdoms, the other wants me to include Dragonmarks and some elements from the Eberron setting. To make matters worse, the player who loves Iron Kingdoms doesn't like Eberron, so he doesn't want the Eberron inspired bits in the campaign. So what to do? How do I balance between the players' wishes and mine? I want to say, "This is my campaign, stick to it!" But it is their game too. So what to do?
—Pulling-My-Hair-Out Patrick

If you've been reading Save My Game for a while, you know I am a big fan of catering the action and the game to the likes and desires of the players. I am always adjusting my game and story to interesting story bits my players come up with, or emotional kicks they show during the game. That said, you're right. You're the DM, and it is your game, and the game absolutely has to be engaging and fun for you too. For many DMs, this means coming up with your own world and world-building concepts. For others, this means playing in someone else's sandbox. It sounds like you are the former type of DM, and if that's true, you should run your own setting and tell the players that's what you are doing. From there, go out of your way to craft a game with the story and action those characters would like to see. Find the common ground between their campaign likes, and use it to infuse your game with action, story, and themes your players will love.

Also feel free to invite them to run a side game or two in their beloved setting, and maybe your entire group can learn first hand why they find their setting of choice so appealing. Worst-case scenario—you'll have too many games to play!

Clog Our Mailbox!

Your game needs saving, or you have some game saving advice of your own? Drop us a line at dndinsider@wizards.com with the worlds "Save My Game" as your subject line. Maybe next month we'll talk about your problem or feature some bit of advice that comes from the mailbag.

You can also join the game saving conversation on our message boards, but piping in on the discussion of DM tips and tricks. Stephen makes it a point to visit and chat with those who agree and disagree with him.